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POLICE · DETECTIVE · STORY

THE BLACK SOUL

BY

BEULAH · POYNTER

WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE HAS WRITTEN A STORY FOR OUR NEXT NUMBER. THE TITLE IS "SANCTUARY." WATCH FOR IT!

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE BLACK SOUL

A PSYCHOLOGICAL DETECTIVE STORY

By BEULAH POYNTER

CHAPTER ONE

THE girl in the shabby brown suit stood on the curb at the Fifth Avenue crossing, staring in bewilderment at the back of a disappearing machine as it became lost to view in the maze of the noonday traffic crush.

Three times in the past week she had seen the huge black touring car with its gorgeously attired occupant, black maid and uniformed chauffeur. Three times she had stood as she stood now, rooted to the spot as though hypnotized, and had watched it disappear. Each time she had stared into the dark glowing heavy-lidded eyes of the woman who sat buried in furs in the luxurious depths of the velvet cushions; nothing visible except her small white perfectly chiseled face and clouds of blue-black hair.

She was certain the woman's eyes had followed hers in the same manner her own had followed the woman's, and an uncanny something had told her that she desired to speak with her as much as she wanted her to.

The thought was ridiculous as she reasoned it out, for there could be nothing in common between herself, a shabby shop girl, and the beautiful, obviously wealthy woman of culture; yet the thought remained as she tore herself from the spot and proceeded over to Sixth avenue, where she was employed.

She felt that in some manner the woman sensed the difference between herself and her surroundings; for while working in a dingy, hopelessly sordid suit and cloak shop, Grace Mathers had ambitions, had education and refinement, and had dreamed of achieving something of consequence when she first arrived in the great city, which so many times had sung the death-knell for young aspira-

tions. These hopes, ambitions, aspirations were all but crushed out of her.

Too early in the game she learned that the sacrifices her father and mother had made to enable her to come to New York and study voice culture were useless. The sweet piping voice—which in a small town seemed of value, which had caused friends and relatives to predict a career on the stage for her—proved to be like that possessed by thousands of other young girls, more attractive, more magnetic, and yet who were still beating their wings hopelessly against the iron door which opened to the ladder of fame.

Grace had been too proud to admit defeat, but when the knowledge came that there was positively no career in music ahead of her, she had thrown her head back, faced the inevitable, and had become determined to earn her living in some other way, and repay her parents for what they had done for her in their mistaken ambitions and idolatry. It had been a bitter struggle, for there had been more applicants than there were positions, and Grace was inexperienced; then the pretense at being successful even though only on paper had not added to her happiness. Youth ever clings to hope no matter what rebuffs it meets, and Grace was young; hence in pretending success to her dear ones at home, success seemed to loom ahead of her, though it would never come in her chosen field of endeavor—music.

"Great looker that," said a friendly voice at her elbow; she turned abruptly and faced a young, twinkly-eyed policeman who had evidently been watching her from his vantage-point as her amazed bewildered eyes had stared at the black touring car; now completely lost to view.

"Who is she?" Grace asked, smiling at his salutation. A friendly voice was so unusual to the lonesome girl that any was welcome, even her scrubwoman's.

"Sheila Del Monte, the opera singer," he replied.

"I never heard her myself, but they say she's got Patti and Garden, Farrar and the whole bunch of singers wiped off the map. If she's as good a singer as she looks she must be some pippin!"

"And she looked at me as if she wanted to know me!" thought the girl as she trudged along, struggling through the seething mass of humanity that rubbed shoulders day after day, but whose hearts and hands never met.

It was the desire to keep in touch with the beautiful, with elegance and refinement which induced her every day to walk several blocks out of her way and make her journey down Fifth avenue, instead of the street where she worked. Now something else impelled her to do it—an intense yearning desire to see Sheila Del Monte, the woman who had succeeded where she had failed, the woman the public worshipped, to hear her voice, to have her address her, for Grace knew sooner or later the singer would do so. She knew she would stop her car at the curb and call her, the shabby little shop girl, to her side, and she, the great Del Monte, would speak to her.

Sooner than she expected the meeting came about. After the day's work was over, infinitely weary, yet filled with an unusual glow, and an intuitive something which drove her against her rebelling body, to lengthen her tiring walk homeward, she again went over to the avenue—and as though standing in wait for her, she came face to face with the great black car stationed before a jeweler's.

The chauffeur was alone, an object of curiosity in his unusual black and gold uniform which accentuated his ebony hugeness. Grace continued her journey, the singer came out of the shop and started to enter the waiting car, but, with her foot on the step, she saw her!

Her dark beautiful face lighted strangely, a weird twisted smile crept about a singularly lovely mouth, and motioning with one daintily gloved hand to the wide-eyed girl, she said in a throaty infinitely sweet whisper:

"Come here, child."

Grace obeyed. The woman entered the car and with a gesture bade her follow. There was no question in Grace's mind of disobeying. She sank back into the cushions with a sigh of content, and closed her eyes for the moment. It was all as she had dreamed in the long ago days in the little home-town, only all this luxury should have been her own. A wistful smile curved her lips, too often tightly drawn with repression.

The woman, evidently noticing her smile, laid her hand for a moment on hers. The heat of it and a strange tingling vibration with which it seemed charged, caused Grace to open her eyes and stare at the singer. A reassuring smile met her gaze.

They rode along in silence, through the twisting, tortuous throng of vehicles, hurrying, scurrying mass of humanity, in and out of side streets, until at last the car came to a standstill before an old brown-stone house somewhere in the thirties. Then Del Monte bade her alight, and after inserting a key under a weird-looking gargoyle-like knocker, she flung open the door and led the way into a dimly-lighted hall-way, filled with a heavy musky perfume, heady, exotic and baffling, which Grace realized came from the fumes of incense burning in the centre of the room just ahead, but which was almost hidden by the black curtains which hung in the doorway.

For a moment she hesitated on the threshold, a shudder of repulsion shaking her slight form, as the exotic scent greeted her nostrils and the peculiarity of her surroundings became indelibly impressed upon her vision; but as the woman's hand touched her arm with a little impelling thrust forward, the feeling of hesitancy left her, and she followed her hostess into the darkened black draped room.

There were windows high above her head, but the daylight was obscured by velvet curtains similar to the ones which acted as portieres, and what illumination the room was afforded came from candles in bronze holders set in little sockets in the wall. A divan, covered with black velvet and cushions of the same material, occupied one whole side of the room; before it burned the incense. Opposite the divan was a sort of altar formed of ebony and resting upon it was a large bronze image, an idol unlike any Grace had ever seen.

Drawing the girl into the centre of the room, the woman allowed the curtains to drop noiselessly behind her and shut out all light and sunshine of the street outside; then, with a quick, graceful movement she flung herself on the long broad couch and motioned Grace to sit beside her. Wonderingly the girl did so. The singer then touched a tinkly bell which rested on a table near her hand, and upon the entrance of a huge ebony-black negro, clad in Arabian trousers and tuban, she ordered coffee and cigarettes. When alone again, she turned to her visitor, who, somehow, did not deem it strange, that she, who never smoked, should be blowing scented cloudy rings into the air, like an habitue of Turkish tobacco; then, with a slow, lazy smile through half-closed, long-lidded eyes, she said:

"Now tell me all about yourself!"

It was not a request, rather a command, yet Grace did not resent it nor feel that idle curiosity alone prompted the desire for her history; surely commonplace enough, when one considered her appearance. She did not hesitate, but told the woman everything. She began at the beginning—how months ago, when at a society concert at home, her singing had brought forth plaudits and all manner of compliments from the audience gathered there.

She touched upon the sacrifice entailed to secure the money to bring her to New York; she laid bare her bruised and bleeding soul as she had never before, when she spoke of her bitter disappointment, her destroyed illusions when she learned to a certainty that despite what friends and relatives had said, what she had believed, that she had no voice.

"Sing for me!" the woman said abruptly. She arose, and flinging aside the hangings, led the bewildered girl into the other room, where there was a piano. She seated herself, and as in a dream Grace sang the melody she played, sang falteringly, pitifully conscious that the other was a world-famed Diva, yet feeling impelled by some dominant force stronger than herself to obey, though the doing so was torture.

"Bad! Very bad!" exclaimed the singer. "Ugh, terrible!" but as her eyes met Grace's and Grace saw the laugh in them, the words were robbed of their sting.

"I know," she said, "I know now." Despite her effort, however, a little sob caught in her throat. The singer laid her hand on hers in quick sympathy.

"And you love music very much?" she said. Grace nodded. "Above Everything? Everything?" The eagerness in her voice caused the girl to instantly forget her humiliation.

"Yes," she replied.

"Listen to me!" She turned to the piano and sang. Her voice was magnificent; never had Grace heard anything so marvelous; it seemed to grip her heart, to tear at it, twist it, torture it; she began to cry, at first softly, silently, then with great, shaking sobs, which ended in hysteria as the *prima donna* turned to her and, closing the piano with a bang, smiled that slow enigmatical smile which so puzzled her.

"You love it; yes, you love music," said the woman. "How much, I wonder!"

"Above everything!" cried Grace. "More than anything in the world!"

"You can sing like that also," said the woman—she paused as though waiting for the words to take their full effect—"also—if you are willing to make great sacrifices. Don't misunderstand me—not sacrifices such as you have made—greater far than that—your liberty, your freedom, your girlhood!"

"Yes, yes!" breathed the girl in ecstasy, drawing closer to the singer, whose glowing, livid eyes gleamed like a cat's in the darkened room, whose impelling magnetism gripped and shook her.

"Come!" said the singer. She took the girl's cold, trembling hand and drew her to her knees before her. Then cupping the girl's chin with her two hands, she looked long and earnestly into her face—a pretty, flower-like face it was; lovely, but commonplace. "Yes," she said at last, "you'll do it. I thought you would, and you shall sing! Even as I sing! And you shall be beautiful—as beautiful as I am! You shall be famous! Rich! You shall have the world at your feet—but"—her eyes narrowed—"you will never have love; you will never have children laughing about you, nor calling you mother."

Grace laughed scornfully. "Love! When I want fame! I can dispense with love!" Then feeling that the Diva was mocking her she cried impatiently, trying to draw away from the other's grasp. "Why have you said all this to me? It's an impossibility! I can't sing! I can't sing at all, and I'm only a shop-girl. I've no money, I've——"

"You shall sing," said the woman, her eyes burning with intensity as she again fascinated the girl with her gaze. "You shall sing!"

"How? How?"

Del Monte placed her arm about Grace, and the girl felt the tremors which shook her as though she were going through some terrific inward struggle.

"What I say to you must remain a secret as long as you live," she said. "Should you divulge it, your life wouldn't be worth the living. You are free to accept or refuse the proposition I shall make you, but you must give me your sacred oath to always respect my confidence."

"I do!" Grace breathed.

The singer's eyes became glowing coals of fire that seemed to burn into her very soul, but she did not move from her recumbent position nor speak while Del Monte explained the curious, seemingly impossible but infinitely horrible compact into which she wished her to enter, but her face became white with incredulity, ashen with horror, and her slight form shook with the enormity of it. When the singer had finished speaking, she said, in a low, trembling voice, fraught with determination:

"I'll do it! I'll do it!"

The woman sank back, closing her eyes. Beads of perspiration gleamed on her smooth forehead, then a paroxysm of coughing seemed to mock and tear her as she strove to rise. She clung helplessly to the girl instead.

CHAPTER TWO

THE life into which Grace suddenly plunged was so different from the commonplace existence which had been hers heretofore, that in the beginning it seemed like a dream. Her hostess went with her to the rooming-house where she occupied a hall bedroom to fetch away her pitiful little belongings. The Diva had objected at first at her leaving the house even upon such an errand, but Grace had insisted that even though she were given an entire new wardrobe, nothing could replace her parents' pictures, her letters, nor the little hand-made things her mother had spent so many hours upon, stitching mother-love into every seam. Del Monte had smiled the crooked, twisted smile at the girl's loyalty, saying: "Love, you've no place for any kind of love!" but at the girl's wide-eyed astonishment she had laughed.

Grace was given a room which opened off Del Monte's own. A charming feminine little chamber, bright and full of sunshine—totally different from the ebony-draped rooms below—but which, despite everything to the contrary in looks, held something of the noiseless, uncanny atmosphere in which the entire house was bathed. The girl found herself glancing over her shoulders as she climbed the stairs, or stepped into an empty room; an icy hand seemed to be laid upon her spine each time as she hastened to switch on the lights; she grew to listen for the swish-swish of silken skirts that seemed to be everywhere in the air, but never visible.

Yet she was not unhappy. She argued with herself that the weird atmosphere of the house came from its unusual hangings and general furnishings—black dominating everywhere—that because no daylight ever filtered through the closed windows it became damp and uncanny; that the utter quiet (because street noises were obliterated) caused her to imagine she heard sounds.

Her hostess was consideration itself. Everything that a girl's fancy could depict was showered upon her. Clothes, books, flowers, candy, perfumes, seemingly from mid-air, appeared in her wardrobe, upon her dressing table, or desk. Young enough and enthusiastic enough to revel in these material things, Grace fairly bathed her beauty-loving soul in luxury. Save when she slept, she

was rarely alone; always the Diva kept beside her, whether motoring through the park, whether she lay idly on her divan, reading, or in the dressing room at the theatre, she demanded the girl's presence. Though she scarcely realized it, Grace was virtually a prisoner, albeit a willing one.

Del Monte's maid, an ebony-hued, silent, stealthy-footed, efficient woman of nameless age, attended to her wants as well as those of her mistress, and Grace soon became used to being waited upon—to rely on others to do for her what heretofore she had done for herself. One thing alone was forbidden her—to ever touch the piano. Except for the day of her entrance into the strange household, the lid of it had never been lifted. Music was a thing unknown—always silence prevailed. When she questioned her hostess as to when her lessons were to begin, when she was to study, the woman had given her the same crooked smile, and replied:

"It isn't necessary that you study; it will come. When the time is ripe you shall sing!"

But the girl's repeated questions seemed to irritate her, and her dark eyes would snap with fire, and her face grow livid as though with repressed rage, even though she smiled.

"You are impatient, yes?" she said once, her voice metallic, vibrant; so cold it chilled the girl and made her draw back in dismay. "I said you should not be impatient—that you should sing! You shall. Haven't you everything in the world now? All luxury at your command? Before you came here you were practically starving; see what you have now! And yet you wail: Sing! Sing! Sing! Do you wish my death? If you are not content, go! Go away! Go back to your miserable hall bedroom, your shabby garments, your sweat-shop, your corned beef and cabbage! Go, but leave me my few years of life in peace!"

An outburst of coughing caused her tirade to cease, and all contrition over what she had done, Grace flung her arms about her benefactress, begging forgiveness for saying anything to disturb her.

"You must not wish my death," the Diva said after she could control herself.

"I don't! Believe me, I don't!" wailed the girl. "Indeed, indeed, I never meant it that way. I appreciate all you are doing for me; don't you know that? And I'm grateful—and I——" She could not say "I love you," for something about the woman, despite her kindness, her marvelous beauty, repelled her.

"Every time you crave to sing you hasten my death," said the Diva. She withdrew from Grace's arms and rose, shaking herself as though to chase away unpleasant thoughts. "Never speak of it again. Call Cassandra." Cassandra was the black maid whom Grace instinctively disliked and feared at the same time, although she was inoffensive and servile to her.

Upon her entrance Grace slipped out of the room, but not before she had seen the black maid's huge eyes roll back with terror, and her skin become a sickly yellow.

Trembling, shaken with something she could not understand, she fled to her own room, there to close and lock her door after her as though to shut out some nameless, unseen terror which was following her. Almost she felt tempted to do as the Diva had said—go back; back to the hall bedrooom, and the cloak and suit house, back to the sunshine of the street, the clean outdoors, and do away with all this mystery, leave this strange but gorgeously beautiful woman, who, though kindness itself, spelled terror for all around her. But the luxury of her surroundings had gotten into her blood, the desire to fulfill her ambition, which she never doubted would be accomplished, held her as by iron rivets, and resolutely casting aside all thought of not keeping to her bargain, she flung aside her clothing and crawled into her snowy satin coverletted bed, to sink into a deep slumber filled with roseate dreams of realized ambition, world-wide fame and an adoring public.

How long she slept she had no way of determining, but she awoke suddenly, uncertain why she had done so, her face bathed in clammy sweat, her body shaking as with chills, her heart beating so hard it shook her covering. For a moment she lay there, afraid to move, a prey to nameless, shivering horror, a terror of something she could not see. Her eyes strove to pierce the blackness of the gloom which enveloped her, but could see nothing. Then again it came—the thing which had awakened her—a blood-curdling, low, but infinitely terrible cry, like an animal being tortured, yet like no animal's cry she had ever heard; rather the sound was half human, half beast. Her flesh crawled as it was repeated; she tried to cover her ears with her hands to drown it, but again and again it came! Subconsciously she knew it came from the Diva's room. At last, with a super-human effort, she dragged herself from her bed and toward the hallway. Summoning every atom of courage she possessed, she flung open the door.

It was quiet without, and dark, save for the flickering light of the tapers in their bronze sockets on the wall. She leaned against the door, striving to force herself to go to the singer's room, fearing to face what she might find there; yet, dreading more to stay in her room alone and listen to those cries, now a low whimper, like the moan of a lost soul. As she stumbled toward Del Monte's door, a faint light gleaming from under the threshold guiding her, the door itself opened, and Cassandra stepped into the hall; she drew back with something very like a snarl as she saw the crouching, terror-stricken girl, and would have darted back into the bedroom had Grace not caught her dress and held her.

"What is it?" she sobbed. "What has happened? My God, what is it?"

"Go back!" whispered the negress hoarsely, casting a fearful glance over her shoulder. "For Gawd's sake, missy, go back. 'Tain't nuffin' for you to hear or see."

"But," expostulated the girl. Before she could say more the negro she had grown to know as Kaldah joined them, seeming to have sprung from mid-air, so noiseless had been his approach. At a gesture from Cassandra, he gently, but with a grip of steel, placed his hand on Grace's unwilling shoulder and forced her into her own room.

The key turning in the knob caused her to fall upon the floor by her bed, and sob aloud in panic-stricken hysteria until, utterly spent, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER THREE

WITH morning came the sunlight, which, falling full upon her face, wakened the girl and caused her to turn, bewildered, puzzled at finding herself in the cramped position on the floor. Then, when a realization of what had occurred the night before came to her, she struggled to her feet and rushed madly to the door, expecting to find it locked, and to cry aloud to be released. Instead, the knob turned easily, and she almost fell into the hallway as it swung open from the impact of her body. She came face to face with Del Monte, who was passing. For a moment she stared at the singer, unable to comprehend

that she stood before her alive, well, and smiling. The Diva herself evidently noticing her sleeping garments, said in a caressingly, sweet voice:

"Dear child, aren't you well? Don't you know breakfast is served? Shall I have Cassandra fetch you a tray?"

In reply, the girl mumbled something. The woman's cool, unconcerned manner forbade any mention of what she had heard the night before, though Grace was not actress enough to hide her feelings.

"You do look frightfully ill," continued the singer. She stepped inside the girl's room, and laid a cool hand on Grace's forehead, but withdrew it quickly as she sensed the shudder the girl experienced at her touch, while her long-lidded eyes narrowed balefully.

"You must have not slept well, dear; you seem feverish. Get back into bed, and I'll send Cassandra to you."

Gratefully Grace obeyed her, feeling that she was really ill. Waves of fever surged over her, every bone ached, while a vertigo caused her room to sway with her. Her exuberant vitality and youthful vigor had been somewhat debilitated by her surroundings, and the shock of the night before was playing havoc with her nerves.

The woman was obviously genuinely concerned about her, and lost no time in sending the negress to her, who administered to her comfort in a way indicative that the girl's welfare was the most vital thing in the world.

All day she hovered around her, and at night the singer came again. She seemed to be unusually happy, for her eyes sparkled and the twisted smile wreathed her face. Her long, beautiful body was wrapped from chin to toe in a mantle of sable, above which her delicately chiselled face shone like a marble goddess. Even feeling the repulsion which now always swept over her when in the Diva's presence, Grace could not but respond to the magnetism of the woman, the glorious animalism of her beauty which dimmed all animate and inanimate things about her.

"How are you now, my dear?" said the caressing voice.

Grace laughed. "Perfectly well, thank you. My day in bed has done wonders for my rather ragged nerves. I never felt better!"

She purposely avoided meeting the Diva's eyes, lest her own should betray the knowledge she now, above all else, desired to hide.

"Splendid! Splendid! You must never become ill. You realize how very necessary it is for you to retain your health. Never, never could you sing if you lost your wonderful vitality—your robust youth! Come now, dress. I sing 'Carmen' to-night, and I want you beside me."

As she dressed under the watchful eyes of her hostess, the girl wondered at the sermons on health which were always hers, when the Diva herself, most glorious of singers, was already battling with the grim destroyer who showed his handprints upon her pale, chiselled face—pain marked regardless of its beauty.

CHAPTER FOUR

GRACE'S position in the theatre was a peculiar one. She was never allowed to address any one of the company, nor stand in the entrance at any time to hear the opera except when the Diva herself was singing; then she was placed where the singer could command a view of her should she desire to do so, and requested to listen to every note. That she was an object of curiosity to Del Monte's associates, Grace was very well aware, for they knew she was not an understudy, scarcely a maid, and yet always present. As the months had rolled on, the girl felt that she knew the singer's favorite rôles by reason of having heard them so often, and had she been permitted to do so, could have sung them. Sometimes her throat ached with the desire to sing, but always the strange gleam in her benefactress' eye forbade her mentioning it.

This night the Diva sang better, if possible, than usual, and Grace felt herself in a glow of ecstasy as she listened to the golden tones from her beautiful lips. As the curtain fell on the last note, she sighed and turned to the dressing room; for the time being she had forgotten the realities of life, the petty jealousies of the theatre, the strangely cold kindness of Del Monte, and had allowed her music-loving spirit to soar into the realms of the unreal.

For a moment she hesitated in the wings to allow a young man, one of the minor singers, to pass her. A handsome, manly young chap, whose magnificent physique was displayed in all its muscular beauty by the tawdry tights and doublet he wore. A white-toothed smile illumined an unusually good-natured-looking face, typically American in all its features, as his keen eyes met her wide blue ones, and Grace bowed her head in salutation as she turned away.

The young man, however, evidently desirous of speaking with her, blocked the small passageway, now being obscured by the scenery the stagehands were shifting, and said in a boyishly wholesome manner:

"Say, don't you ever talk to any one?"

Grace shook her head, and tried to pass him. He spread his arms, making a frame for himself in the space between the scenery, while he continued smiling. There was no impertinence about him, rather the frank admiration of a small boy desirous of playing with a small girl. Grace flushed as she returned his smile, but she felt no annoyance.

"You know," he continued softly, glancing about to see if his words were unheard, "you're such a young little thing, and so—so pretty—it's sort a shame you never get out and have a good time with the bunch. Don't you ever get tired sticking around Del Monte? Not that she isn't—er—all right, you know, but she's—she's—so queer—er, peculiar."

"She is peculiar," Grace grudgingly admitted.

"You're so different," continued the boy, "you look—well—human, and she's—doggone it—she just isn't. She's—she's sort of uncanny—we all feel it. I don't know what she is to you. I guess you must be fond of her to stick around all the time, but it's the wrong atmosphere for you."

Grace strove to be indignant, realizing that this boy had no right to probe into her secrets, nor to question Del Monte in any way; but there was something so genuine about him, so absolutely disinterested in his manner, she found she could not be angry; however, with a show of dignity she did not feel, she drew herself to her full height and said, coldly:

"I can't discuss Madame Del Monte with you. Let me pass, please."

"Oh, say," he cried contritely, "don't be sore. I said the wrong thing, I guess. I'm always doing that, but with this bunch of dagoes and wops, and us about the only real white people, I've just been aching to know you. You aren't a real New Yorker, are you? No; I thought not. Neither am I. I came from Kentucky. I thought I was another Caruso, or a John McCormick—so did my folks. Believe me, my vanity got some jolt! After I found I couldn't set the world afire, nor let Mr. Emerson send me vocaling over the world, I jumped at the chance to warble here a bit. Say, let's be friendly, can't we?"

He held out his hand, and unhesitatingly Grace placed

her own in it, thrilling pleasantly at the warm, tender pressure of it.

"Come, have a bite to eat with me after I'm dressed, will you?" he said eagerly. "I'm dying to talk to you. I'll talk your arm off about——"

"Oh, I can't, Mr. ———" she stammered.

"Steel. Thomas Steel. Tom, my friends call me. Call me Tom, won't you?" There was a caress in the request.

She smiled. "I'm sorry, Tom, but——"

"Miss Mathers!" Cassandra's voice charged with venom caused the couple to start apart guiltily, Grace trembling, and suddenly pale.

"Pardon me!" she gasped, and without a backward glance, followed the black woman through the maze of scenery, properties and trunks littering the stage, to the *prima donna's* dressing room.

"Gawd!" muttered Cassandra, as she led the way, "ain't you got no better sense than to be talking with a man around a theatre?"

"That will do, Cassandra," said the girl icily. "I take no orders from you, and no criticisms on my conduct."

"I'm only talking for your own good," muttered the woman. "If you'd seen as many things as I have, you wouldn't run no chances; no ma'am."

Grace wanted to ask her what she meant, but the negress continued in a low voice, pregnant with meaning: "I don't see why you come 'round, anyhow; you ain't been with the madame sence you was a baby, and don't know anything else——"

"Since I were a baby!" exclaimed the girl, looking at the black woman in astonishment. "Have you?"

"Yes!" the woman laughed.

"But she—she's so young!" stammered Grace.

"Yes, she looks younger than I do," said the other, "a heap younger, but she ain't. She looked just like that when she took me from the West Indies; she never changes." There was an awe-stricken note in her throaty whisper, and Grace shivered. "She don't never grow a day older, not a day; but she's old—old as sin!"

"Why do you stay?" said the girl, sensing the hatred in Cassandra's voice, and feeling that for some reason she was lying. The negress laughed and shrugged her shoulders in a manner she had acquired from her mistress.

"Where'd I go? What'd I do? I don't know anything but madame and this life. Then I'd be afraid. She's awful, Gawd, she's awful when she's angry!"

This, Grace was soon to learn, for as she reached the dressing room the Diva was standing in the doorway ablaze with fury, her beautiful face like nothing but a fiend incarnate. Without a word she reached out, and catching the girl by the arm, dragged, almost threw her into the dressing room, while Cassandra, yellow eyeballs rolling, black skin ashen gray, followed.

"Now," snarled Del Monte, her lips drawing back over the white teeth like an animal's, her dark eyes gleaming strangely yellow. "Now explain your conduct! Haven't I forbidden love! What did you allow that man?"

"He didn't make love to me!" interrupted Grace. "He only spoke to me about——"

"I forbade you to speak to any one, didn't I? Any one at all around the theatre?" As the singer advanced toward her, Grace backed away, covering her eyes with her hand so as not to see the insane glitter in the other's. "And you talked of me," she continued. "You ungrateful girl! You viper! This is how I am repaid!"

Then she turned upon the negress crouching in the corner, trembling so her knees could be seen hitting against each other.

"Why did you allow this? Didn't I tell you to watch her—always to watch her? What did you say to her? Answer me. What did you say to her?"

"Nothing, nothing!" wailed the maid.

"Liar! liar!" shrieked the singer. "Will you never learn to obey me? Liar!" She snatched up a heavy silver-handled brush and began hitting the black woman over the head with it, screaming maledictions upon her as she did so. Cassandra made no move to protect herself, though the blood trickled down her forehead from the abrasions the blows made, but continued to wail and moan, crouching at the feet of the mistress.

"Oh, Gawd! Miss Sheila! Don't do that, honey! Don't! You'll bring on the ha'nts! Sure as Gawd, you'll bring on the ha'nts! Don't do it! Don't do it!" she screamed. But the singer was livid with fury, utterly beside herself. Suddenly she flung aside the brush, and caught the shivering negress by the shoulders, shaking her as a dog would a rat, and beating her head against the wall.

"Don't!" cried Grace. Her tongue loosened in her fear that Del Monte would kill the black woman, although she wondered that Cassandra made no attempt to protect herself other than strive to ward off the blows, for she was a large, raw-boned creature, and could easily have gotten the best of the slight, almost fragile, Del Monte.

At her exclamation the Diva turned and faced her, loosening her hold on Cassandra, who sank to the floor, beating her head upon it, and rocking back and forth wailing about "ha'nts". For an instant Grace thought the singer was going to attack her also, then suddenly a swift, terrible change came over the woman—something inexplicable, but infinitely awful. The rage which had made her face livid, which had robbed it of its beauty, had still left her a woman. Now the humanness of her seemed to vanish, an unearthly glow seemed to hover about her, her features became pinched, her expression unutterably terrible, the pallor on her face disappeared, and as the girl's terror-stricken eyes gazed upon her, she seemed to grow darker and darker until her face took on the color of the somber gown she wore. She leaned forward, and Grace shuddered as the loathsome face came closer, closer, as a fetid, feverish breath blew in her face; she tried to draw back, to shut out the sight of the Diva, but could not move—like a bird fascinated by a snake she stood trembling, terrified beyond expression. The woman crouched, until suddenly she dropped upon her knees, and a snarl like a fighting, hunger-mad wolf, escaped from her purple-black lips, then a loud, horrible cry followed, the cry that Grace had heard before in the night—the cry that had made her sick with nausea, blind with terror.

"Oh, Gawd! The ha'nts! The ha'nts!" wailed the negress. With a bound she sprang to her feet, and running to the dressing room door, flung it open. "Git out!" she cried to Grace. "Git out! For Gawd's sake."

Before Grace could pull her bewildered wits together, could gain command of her numbed faculties enough to obey the maid, the Diva was upon her; she sprang at her, burying her hands in the girl's thick, brown hair, tearing at it, moaning, groaning, whimpering, as she struggled and pulled. Sick with pain, Grace tried to escape the encircling arms, but the insane woman who had seemed so frail, now had super-human strength, inspired by an abnormal hatred for her *protégé*.

Seeing the impossibility of Grace escaping, the colored woman flung the door shut and locked it, then turned to assist her. With all her might she pulled at the Diva's arms, finally separating the two women. Then, in a blaze of fury, she hit her mistress a blow full in the face, which caused her to stagger and fall in a heap.

The world swam with Grace; myriads of lights danced

before her eyes, the gowns on their hangers on the wall became alive, shimmering masses of satins and silks dancing in a weird, unearthly Bacchanalian revel. They seemed to approach her, to wrap their lustrous perfumed lengths about her to crush her in the folds of their silken maze. She gasped, beat them off, and twisting them tighter about her, she smothered in their embrace. Her eyes became blinded with the red lights which joined in the dance, they also seemed forcing her down, down, and then all became oblivion.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN Grace came to, everything was strangely quiet. She seemed to have been unconscious for hours, days, centuries. She was still lying on the floor, and realized she was in Del Monte's dressing room, and the red lights which had blinded her and danced before her eyes were burning just as steadily as usual. The motley array of gorgeous gowns belonging to the Diva's wardrobe hung in dignified rows upon the wall with a cretonne cover hiding them from view. At first she wondered why she was lying on the floor, then she wondered why she had fainted. With a sick shudder she remembered the scene which had taken place. Her hand touched her forehead and came away damp from the blood the Diva's long fingers had drawn as her nails had sunk deep into the flesh. But Del Monte herself sitting by her dressing table, cold, quiet, pallid, and calm, in the act of removing her make-up with cold cream, made the girl doubt the reality of her senses, and fancy herself the victim of a very bad dream—a terrible nightmare; while Cassandra, replacing satin shoes in a bag on the wall, accentuated the unreality of her belief.

After a while she managed to draw herself to a sitting posture. At her movement Del Monte turned, and favoring her with a slow, twisted smile, said in the caressingly, sweet voice Grace had now grown to loathe:

"You've had quite a nap, child. Do you feel better?"

"Nap?" said Grace. Her tongue was thick and furred as though she had been ill a long time, and she had difficulty in speaking. A subtle cough from Cassandra made her look in the negress' direction. The maid shook her head as though bidding her to be silent, while her black eyes were expressive of some hidden secret, a warning of untold menace. Grace's bewilderment at first made her slow of comprehension, but she remained silent, thinking it best to keep her own counsel.

The Diva looked at her as though studying what went on behind those keen blue eyes, then she rose slowly, shaking out the folds of her negligee as she did so. Even under the stress of the moment, Grace could not help but notice how very, very thin she was, how attenuated her hands and arms appeared, and how pallid her face.

Was it a dream, she pondered, a terrible, impossible nightmare which had shaken her to her very soul? The woman before her, long, slim, spiritual-looking, certainly could not be in reality the crazed inhuman creature who had attacked her a short time ago—that creature could only have been a fantasy of her brain, or a dream figment.

"I'm terribly tired," said Del Monte, casting aside the negligee. "'Carmen' always takes all my strength. Never mind those shoes, Cassandra; let's get out of here."

The negress turned from her task, and silently assisted her mistress into her street attire; her fingers seemed to be all thumbs, for Del Monte reproved her gently several times. She cast a glance now and then at Grace, who still half sat, half lay, upon the floor, but said nothing. As she adjusted her hat before the cheval glass at one end of the dressing room, Grace laboriously arose, and in a half-dazed manner also put on her own hat and coat.

During the drive home no one spoke. Grace was afraid to trust herself, fearing that no matter what remark she made it would be the wrong thing. She was conscious that Del Monte was watching her every movement, and although she could not rid herself of the idea that the incident was only a nightmare, she was certain that Del Monte herself realized just what had occurred during the nightmare. An overwhelming desire to get away from it all, even at the sacrifice of her ambition, surged over her. A desire to get back into the clean, sweet country, away from mysteries, black draperies, uncanny atmosphere; back to her father and mother, and the homely small-town people.

As they drew up to the silent, sinister house in the thirties, and the car came to a standstill, Cassandra alighted to assist her mistress, but before following her, she managed to whisper to Grace:

"Go home, missy; for Gawd's sake, go home!"

Inside the dark, evil-draped hallway, Del Monte asked the girl to come to her room with her. Trembling with fear, yet unable to disobey, Grace followed, casting a frightened glance at the negro maid, whom she now felt was her friend, and desired to save her from her impending fate.

A grate fire was burning in the Diva's boudoir, but, strange to say, did not throw the cheery glow into the room grate-fires usually do. Instead, it flickered and danced and cast uncanny shadows on the dark walls and on the thick black carpet, shadows which mocked and leered at her like queer little devils and wandering souls, shadows which crept closer and closer as though to fling long vacuous arms about her and hold her close against dead bosoms, but which failed—vanished before the embrace.

Grace wanted to shriek aloud for light; bright lights to drive away the evil spirits which lurked in every corner of the room, behind the curtains, beside her chair, over and under her; but the Diva seemed to like the semi-darkness, for she bade the girl draw her chair up to the fire-place, and gave her a cigarette.

For a long time she spoke of casualties, while Grace tried to tell her of her desire to break their compact—tried to tell her how impossible it was for her to continue with their bargain—but she was tongue-tied; the word refused to be uttered; the strange magnetism the Diva had always exerted over her was at its full force to-night, and she was helpless in her presence. Again she found herself admiring the woman's unusual beauty, and arguing with herself she must have dreamed of the attack, that what seemed to have occurred in the dressing room was an impossibility.

Presently she found Del Monte herself speaking of their agreement, speaking in low a low, wonderfully sweet but pathetic voice.

"You know I'm very ill, child. I'm fighting my malady with every fibre of my being, for life is very sweet to me, and I want all there is of it, but the struggle is becoming too much for me, and battle as I may, some day I must fling aside my harness and cry 'quits.' Isn't it strange no one has ever been able to conquer death of the flesh? No alchemist can find the elixir of life, for life to the world in general means these poor bodies. Yet, I've no reason to complain of mine, this body I've inhabited. It's a very beautiful body, even if a frail one. The pleasure I've experienced from it has been infinitely greater than

the pain, and I hate to leave it. Oh, how I hate to leave it! Were it not for you, child, the thought would drive me insane! I will not go into the black void of the infinite, where no friendy hand will be stretched out to guide me, where all is nothingness to a soul like mine. I will not!"

Grace shuddered at the depths of tragedy in her voice, but she could say nothing to comfort her, even as she said "Stretch out a friendly hand." Rather, she sat staring into the fire, striving to forget the dancing demons on the wall.

"I'm afraid of death," said the singer's low voice, "terribly afraid of it, even though I shan't die. The knowledge that I must struggle and choke and battle for breath which flees from me, that an unholy rattle will escape my lips, that I shall become gray and cold and stark—horrible. Oh, my God!"

She covered her face with her thin white hands and rocked her slim body backward and forward under the stress of her emotion. After a while she continued:

"And yet we must all go through it—all of us—and only 1 have escaped crossing into the border. I alone! Ah! and the world would give millions to know how I do it! Her laugh caused the girl to draw farther away and silently pray that Cassandra would come soon and allow her to retire for the night.

"Are you afraid of death?" Del Monte asked suddenly.

"No, I don't know. I don't think so!" Grace stammered. "I never thought much about it, not until I met you."

"Ha!" The exclamation was like a hiss. Grace started to her feet, afraid of a repetition of to-night's dream. But save for the one word, the Diva was calm, cold, smiling. "I suppose it is only natural," she said. "My death is your gain, and your ambition, otherwise you would not be here, for you've no love for me, I quite realize that. I've no love for you. I've told you there is no place for love in your life, and there is none in mine! You are growing like me, child; have you noticed it? Already they ask if you are my sister—the likeness is so startling."

"No!" exclaimed Grace, unable to disguise the dismay in her voice. Despite the admiration she had felt for the Diva's beauty, she now, with all her soul, loathed it, feared it as something hateful, demoniac.

The Diva laughed. "You aren't very complimentary," she said quietly. You said 'No' as though I had insulted you instead of complimented you. I am considered very beautiful, whereas you are—that is, were—plain; whether you deny the likeness or not, the mirror doesn't lie. See for yourself."

She drew the shaking girl towards a pier glass surrounded by lamps; pressing a button, she illuminated the mirror and pulled Grace close to her side, the better to make the comparison.

The sudden light was blinding at first, but after shading her eyes and staring intently at the reflection before her, Grace suddenly gave a cry, and swayed against the singer. The two figures facing her in the gilded frame might have been the reflection of one and the same woman; almost of a height and similar proportions; the soft black gown the singer had insisted upon Grace wearing added to the resemblance. But aside from figure and similar clothing, there had been no further likeness. Now as she gazed, Grace seemed to see her robust health vanish, the rounded contour of her face became pinched and fragile like that of the woman standing beside her. Her clear blue eyes, now became shadowy, heavy-lidded, dark, smoldering, black in the intensity of their gaze; her lustrous brown hair, always full of golden glints, seemed to grow dead, then suddenly spring to life, full of purple shadows, and black—black like the Diva's.

"Oh, my God!" cried the terrified girl, as the full force and meaning of it struck her in the face. "Let me go! Let me go home! I must go home!"

"No," said the woman, turning toward her. "Leave me now after so much is accomplished? Do you think I am mad? No; from now on you shall never leave me for a moment, waking or sleeping. Cassandra shall fix you a comfortable bed on that divan, and there you shall sleep, where at any hour of the night, should I need you, I can place my hand upon you."

A low moan was her only answer as the girl stared at her with wide-open, terrified eyes.

CHAPTER SIX

HOURS after Del Monte had fallen asleep, Grace lay on the divan and stared up at the ceiling, shivering, as her fascinated eyes watched the dancing shadows playing upon it and the walls about her. More than ever the shadows mocked her, taunted her for being unable to evade them, to shut out the sight of their sinister meaning.

"You devils! You devils!" she moaned, tossing restlessly about and striving, by burying her head in the pillows, to find peace, and with it, sleep. "Are you only shadows? Or are you a part of her? Are you souls she has stolen, who've bartered everything for beauty and fame? Oh, go away. Oh, God, make them go away!"

God seemed very far off to the girl lying in the great, still room, whose silence was only broken by a tortured sigh now and then, coming from the sleeping woman's lips. Grace grew to listen to those sighs, and felt that if she could only scream, shriek at the top of her lungs, go mad for a moment, relief would come. Perhaps she was mad, perhaps this compact into which she had entered with the strange mysterious woman was but another figment of her brain; perhaps she was still only a little shop girl living in a hall bedroom, living upon dairy lunches and working in a sweatshop; perhaps she was still free to go and come as she chose and imagine herself unhappy and discontented with her lot! Unhappy! She almost laughed aloud at the thought of it. Why, in comparison to her present state of mind she had been wildly, deliriously happy in those sordid days. Why had she ever bartered her liberty, her youth, for this elusive thing—Fame? Surely no happiness, no real material good could ever come through tampering with nature, by trying to evade the thing which had taken place since the beginning of time! Almost she felt that in entering into this contract with Del Monte, she had made a compact with his Satanic Majesty himself, for surely Del Monte's soul was as black as Lucifer's own, and what was to become of her own soul? Her beautiful, white, clean soul that had meant so much to her before meeting Sheila Del Monte, and which had seemed so small in comparison to the triumph, the adoration of the world the singer had offered her. What was to become of her soul?

"Oh, God! Give me back my clean soul. Save me! Save me!" she moaned, and even as she prayed she felt a desire to bury her hot, tortured fingers in Del Monte's satin-white neck, to press and crush until the flesh grew blue and purple, then black, until the veins stood out like whip-cords, and the breath left her; until Del Monte's soul escaped the beautiful, fragile body, and left it cold, lifeless clay, a thing of less value than the veriest rag which she tramped upon, but which the singer adored with a pagan worship. She strove in anguish to banish

the murderous thought which added to the horror of her situation, knowing that with Del Monte's death her hell would be complete, not ended; surely there must be some rescue for her. Young Steel! But under Cassandra's watchful eyes what opportunity had she of even a conversation with him? Yet, contrive it she must! She would be saved! She would be saved! Life grew wonderfully sweet to her in those wee dark hours of the night. Life in the open, sweet and clean, under a pale moon or a brilliant, all-seeing sun—life away from exotic flowers, heavy perfumes, heavy, sinister shadows, even though satin-draped. Life spelled love. She felt a physical ache to be with the dear ones at home, the ones she had so neglected, all but forgotten in her unnatural life, in her desire to attain the things which had been denied her.

"You fool! You fool! You fool!" she groaned aloud. "Had you been ordained to sing, a voice would have been given you instead of a sweet little piping treble! All birds aren't song birds. Perhaps my wee song was only meant for a home, after all—not the public. Oh, I want to get away. I want to get away!"

She beat the pillows as though they were the bars that enclosed her in her prison, and the sobs which shook her were audible enough to waken Del Monte, for she moved uneasily, then sat bolt upright, the flickering shadows from the fire-light playing upon her dead-white face with the streaming black hair falling all about it, giving it an unearthly look.

"Your soul?" she said to the miserable girl, watching her. "What's to be done with your soul?" Then she dropped back onto the bed in uneasy slumber again.

At last came morning. Grace watched the futile struggles of a few dancing sunbeams striving to gain entrance into the room through a small crack between the dark curtains and the window casing, and as God's little messengers greeted her, she determined that rather than continue the existence into which her ambition had flung her, rather than perpetuate all the loathsomeness that Del Monte now spelled for her, she would terminate her life.

At ten o'clock Cassandra opened the door without knocking. She carried a tray, on which were coffee and rolls, and with a side-glance at her mistress to see that she was still sleeping, she stepped noiselessly to Grace's improvised bed. "You awake, missy?" she said in her throaty whisper.

"Yes. I've been awake all night," Grace replied wearily, tossing her heavy brown hair away from her pallid face and turning heavy blue eyes to the black woman.

"I knew it. That's why I fetched you some coffee," said Cassandra, "breakfast won't be ready for hours, and I knew how you'd be feeling."

"Thank you," Grace said gratefully, as she took the cup of fragrant coffee from the woman. She drank it in silence, studying the immobile face before her, and wondering what lay behind those shrewd black eyes, just how much to trust her, just how loyal she was to her mistress. As the maid took the empty cup from her, Grace caught her hand, determined to cast the die and request her assistance to escape.

"Cassandra," she whispered, "I want to go home. I must get away. Can't you help me?"

The negress' yellow eye-balls rolled, and she glanced quickly over her shoulder to see if Del Monte had heard her, but despite the fear expressed on her face, there was sympathy also, which encouraged Grace.

"Gawd! No! But I wished you could, missy. I wished you could!"

"Can't you help me, Cassandra?" pleaded the girl, "can't you? I'll do anything in the world, in my power, if you will; can't you?"

Cassandra shook her bullet-shaped head. "I can't," she said with finality. "I would, if I could. I've nothing against you, but she'd kill me if I did."

"Come with me," Grace said abruptly. "Why do you stay here? You've no love for her. Surely you can find plenty of work away from here, where you'd be much happier. I'll help you. I'll take you back home with me. Please, please help me."

"You don't know, you don't know," muttered the black woman, looking fearfully over her shoulder.

"What don't I know?" whispered Grace hoarsely.

"The ha'nts," Cassandra answered, her black visage working spasmodically.

"No!" Grace sat upright, and drew Cassandra upon the bed beside her. "Don't you know that there are no such things as 'haunts,' don't you?"

"Hm," sniffed the other, "that's all you know. Didn't I say you didn't know? If there ain't why in Gawd's name are you here?"

"Do you know?" asked Grace curiously.

The black woman gave her a side-long glance out of black eyes that suddenly gleamed yellow, her smile, disclosing strong white teeth, was knowing and wicked. Grace shivered, but the shiver was not for fear of Cassandra, rather fear of the thing that Cassandra knew. Though in the beginning Grace had disliked the black woman, now she clung to her as the one human thing in the black shrouded house of shadows and mystery.

"Course I know," muttered Cassandra, "and you'll die before she does—they all did."

"All!" Grace stifled the cry of horror on her lips. "All! Were there others?"

"Yes; but there wasn't a one of 'em so sweet or young as you." A note of tenderness crept into Cassandra's usually harsh voice. "They didn't have much to give up anyway, but they couldn't stand it. They——"

"Did they get away?" Grace whispered, awe-stricken.

"Yes." The woman paused again. Grace shivered. "There's always a way to get away."

"Oh, my God!" wailed the girl, covering her face with her hands.

"Don't, missy; don't!" Cassandra gathered the sobbing figure in her gaunt arms and crooned softly to her, all the time ever glancing toward the recumbent figure of the sleeping singer.

"Help me, Cassandra; help me. I know the way you mean, and I can't do that. I've a little home up-state, with a lovely, dear old mother and my white-haired daddy. Home is all covered with vines now, and the grape arbor is green and sweet-smelling. There's hollyhocks and wild roses, and the birds are singing—singing as I wanted to once, but don't want to any more. I want to get back! Oh, Cassandra, help me, help me!"

For answer the black woman pointed with a shaking finger at the leering, dancing, shadowing demons on the wall; not even the morning light, striving so hard to break the gloom, had succeeded in banishing them.

"There they are," she muttered, terror in her voice. "The others—Miss Sheila would make me one of 'em, and I can't—I can't do it."

"No, no, Cassandra," pleaded the girl, "that isn't possible. Don't you realize she couldn't do such things? She's only a woman, a human being, just as we are. She can't do things like that."

"No? Look at her! Ain't she young, beautiful, when she orter be old and ugly as sin. Ain't she going to live

on and on, always, always? You know it, and ha'nts. Didn't you see them? Didn't you?"

The singer stirred. Cassandra sprang to her feet, taking the tray, with the china and silver upon it, and backing from the girl, who now lay trembling upon the divan, crossed to Del Monte's side.

"Miss Sheila," she said softly, "Miss Sheila." Del Monte opened her long-lidded, sleep-laden eyes, flung an arm, bared to the shoulder, over her head, and yawned.

"Cassandra, I thought I heard some one talking?"

"Miss Grace just woke up," said her maid evenly. "I fetched her some coffee. Shall I bring you some?"

"Yes; my head aches."

As the Diva plunged into the perfumed bath, Cassandra whispered to Grace, in passing her:

"Get that young man at the theatre to help you. He can!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

GRACE was thankful that there was a matinee that day, and that Del Monte was to sing. She felt that if she was compelled to remain indoors the entire day, within the confines of the dark, heavily perfumed house, she would lose her reason; then, again, with all her heart she wanted to see Tom Steel, hoping that in some manner she would have an opportunity to speak with him, and ask him for the assistance she knew he would not refuse.

A second sense must have prompted young Steel to show no recognition of her as he stood at the stage-door when they drove up, and leaving the great black car, passed him on their way into the theatre. Not by a flicker of an eyelash did he betray any interest in the girl, who, pallid and shaken with emotion, almost touched him as she followed the Diva. But as the door swung closed behind them, he tossed aside a half-smoked cigarette, and darted into the theatre.

Del Monte entered the dressing room, seeming not to notice that Grace lagged behind, and it was in the shadow of a friendly piece of scenery, a great rocky wall, that Tom found Grace waiting for him.

"I knew you'd come," she whispered, placing her hand in his, "don't speak, please; I haven't time. She'll notice I'm not there. I'm in trouble, terrible trouble. Will you help me?"

"You know I will," he said heartily, his young face glowing, "what can I do?"

"When she is on the stage come to the dressing room. I'll chance Cassandra's loyalty. Will you come?"

"You bet!" he wrung her hand, and she fled from him, her heart beating tumultuously, with mingled hope and a new-born happiness.

So brief had been their conversation Del Monte had not even noticed her absence, but the room swam with the sick terror Grace felt in facing the singer's somber black eyes.

The time spent before overture was called seemed a century to her. When the Diva left to take her place on the stage, Grace obediently followed her, as was her usual custom, but when the cue came and Del Monte made her triumphant entrance, Grace darted away from her place in the wings, confident that although Del Monte would become insane with anger at her disobeying a command, she would not chance ruining a scene by leaving the stage to search for her.

Tom was waiting for her just outside the dressing room door. Glancing inside, she saw Cassandra mending an embroidered robe. Although the maid had appeared to be her friend, she was too much in doubts of her to trust any conversation before her.

"Come," she said. "We won't stay here." In a corner, hidden by a painted grape arbor and a towering mass of furniture piled piece upon piece so that it became perilous to passers-by, she drew a breath of relief and paused, facing her friend.

"Well," he said, possessing himself of her hand. In spite of her anxiety and intense nervousness, Grace found herself smiling back into his laughing, gray eyes, eyes full of tender meaning, which bade her place entire confidence in them. After a breathless second of silence, she said huskily:

"I can't explain to you. I've given my word, and I can't break it, and the thing itself is so improbable that to you it would be unbelievable. I just must ask you to blindly help me; for God alone knows how bitterly I need help. I am in deadly peril, but I think you can save me, at least you can try."

The smile faded from his face. He drew her close to him, taking her other hand in his as he did so.

"It is Del Monte," he said.

"Yes; I am a prisoner. Even now, if she knew I went with——" she could not finish the sentence. "I must get away."

"That's easy, if that is all you want to do," he whispered. "Instead of going with her to-night, come with me."

Grace shook her head. "It sounds easy, but there are Kaldah (that's the black man) and Cassandra, as well as the chauffeur and Madame herself to contend with."

Tom laughed. "My dear child, you are in a civilized country, which does not countenance slavery. They can't hold you against your will."

Grace laughed wearily. "Del Monte can. She is stronger than I am; she has powers of which you know nothing. Those black people would stop at nothing she commands them to do, not even murder. She declares she has spirits which control them. Then—then I am penniless!" She spread her hands with a gesture of despair.

"I'm not," said the boy. "I'm not rich, but you needn't worry on that score. If you are willing to risk leaving it with me, I'm with you from the word 'go'."

Grace studied a moment. "Are you on until the curtain?" she said at last.

"Yes. Can't you be outside my dressing room when the curtain falls? Then we'll make a break for it."

"I'll do it," she said—a sob choked her. He was so human and comforting; the reaction was almost too much for her.

"Poor little kid," he said softly, placing an arm about her. "I don't know how she got hold of you, nor why, but she's poisonous as a reptile, but you never belonged with her, that I know, and, by God, you aren't going to stay if I can help it. If one-fifth of the tales about her are true, she——"

"Hush!" admonished the girl, hearing a rustling behind her. "Go, now. I'll—I'll be at your dressing room door after the curtain falls."

Cassandra looked up as she entered Del Monte's room. The expression in her black eyes told the girl she knew what had taken place, but she asked no questions, and Grace vouchsafed no information. She dropped on a chaise longue which Del Monte used to relax upon when not singing, and covered her burning face with her hands. She expected a blaze of anger from the singer when she returned from the stage and discovered she had not kept her place in the wings. Her expectations were realized,

but when she explained she was too ill to stand, the singer was contrition itself, and insisted that Cassandra give her some fever drops which she always carried, as unquestionably Grace was feverish.

Even the yellow glint in Cassandra's eyes did not warn her, for she took the liquid gratefully, feeling that unless she were very careful she would be genuinely ill and all her plans would miscarry. Too late, when the room began to reel with her, and the light became hazy and blurred, she realized that she was drugged—that Del Monte had been cognizant of her plans to escape.

In a sub-conscious way she knew that the huge negro Kaldah carried her in his arms out to the waiting machine; that Cassandra explained to the questioning ones she had been taken suddenly ill, and that Madame Del Monte herself pillowed her head on her bosom all the way home.

In the days which followed she became a prisoner in every sense of the word. Never once was she allowed to leave the great silent house, nor the boudoir itself, except in Del Monte's company. All pretense of friendship between herself and the singer was dropped. Del Monte did not strive to hide the dislike she felt for her. As to what took place at the theatre, or Tom Steel's sensations regarding her, she could only guess at, for his name was not mentioned.

Day after day she sat silently watching the woman who was driving her mad, watching her as the singer paced the long room like a caged lioness, her white face becoming whiter and more wax-like, her black eyes more livid and burning, watching her and counting—counting the days which would bring Del Monte's death and her release.

One day Del Monte paused abruptly before her. "You hate me," she said, "and yet the thing I am doing is for your good; you made a compact with me, and all I have done is to compel you to live up to a bargain you wanted to break—and you hate me for it. You went into this with your eyes open—you are to be the gainer, not I. In the end you will have everything you desire, while I shall be cold clay."

"No, you'll never die!" cried the girl wildly. "I shall be the one, and you will live on and on, while I become dust and my soul damned forever and ever, as yours is."

"So that is what is worrying you," said the singer. "You want to perpetuate that miserable little body of yours, do you? Well, do you know I've sometimes wondered what will become of your soul!"

"Oh, let me go; please let me go," Grace cried, throwing herself on her knees at the woman's feet, and clinging to her skirts. "I can't do this thing! I can't. I'd rather die. I've no ambition now. I don't want to sing—I want to go home. Please, please, send me away."

Del Monte flung her aside, laughing stridently.

"Listen, you poor little misguided fool. Three others, as weak and foolish as you, entered into a compact with me, even as you have; I thought you braver and more worth while. They grew tired of waiting for my death and hastened matters themselves. They became afraid. Afraid! Bah! Well, I shall take care that you don't die. Do you hear? You shan't die. And you shan't leave me."

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOM STEEL was not surprised when he received a little envelope which contained a slip of paper and a banknote, the paper explaining that his services were not required at the Coronado Opera House, and the check covering two weeks' salary. He had quite expected that Del Monte would not permit him around the theatre any more when he saw the unconscious form of Grace Mathers being carried out of the stage-door. But a dismissal from the theatre did not prevent him from stationing himself opposite to it day and night, so that he could see the prima donna and her retinue enter and leave. The first day when Grace did not appear he fancied that she was ill from the effects of the drug (for he was certain she had been drugged). When the second, third and fourth days passed and she still was absent, a great fear assailed him. He had no idea what bound her to the weird woman whom a public adored, but whose associates feared and disliked, but he had heretofore thought it some imaginary tie, some contract easily broken, but which the girl's sense of honor forbade her to dissolve. Now he realized that she had indeed spoken the truth when she had said she was in deadly peril. He knew she was not in danger of death; rather some nameless danger which he could not fathom, and hesitated to bring the matter to the attention of the police.

After five days of anxious watching he determined, no matter if they laughed at him, he would seek assistance and demand that an investigation of Del Monte's home be made, and if Grace were there, secure her release. With this object in view he made his way to police headquarters.

As he entered the room preparatory to making his request, Captain Donovan was seated at the telephone, receiving a message which he repeated aloud in his amazement, a message which froze the words on Tom's lips and caused him to depart abruptly without seeking aid for Grace Mathers.

What Captain Donovan had exclaimed into the receiver was:

"Sheila Del Monte dead! You think murdered? Yes, I'll send some one right over."

In that moment Tom Steel realized he loved the pale-faced, silent girl whom he had spoken with but twice in his life. He had often watched her at the theatre, and had been interested in her quiet, reticent manner, her retiring ways and sweet, flower-like loveliness; but it took something like this shock to let him know how infinitely dear she was to him, for he knew only too well that Del Monte's death, if at the hands of an assassin, spelled more trouble for Grace—perhaps danger far greater than if Del Monte were alive.

Scarcely knowing what he was doing, he rushed back to the Coronado Theatre, there to inquire where Del Monte lived, and to reach Grace's side as soon as possible.

Cassandra, pounding on the boudoir door and calling "Miss Sheila! Miss Sheila!" in a frantic voice, caused Grace to start upright, and realize that for the first time during the time she had been made an absolute prisoner, she had slept long and soundly; a bit puzzled that Cassandra could not enter the room, for the door was never locked, she hastened to let the maid in, and found that, contrary to the usual custom, the key was turned in the lock.

"Why was the door locked?" the black woman said suspiciously, coming into the room.

Grace shook her head. "I don't know. I didn't lock it. Madame Del Monte must have done it while I was asleep."

She felt heavy and stupid from her long rest, and swayed a bit as she walked.

"Strange," muttered Cassandra. "And I've been pounding on the door for a half hour. You both sleep like you'd been drugged." As she said the word "drugged"

she sniffed the air and looked at Grace with a peculiar expression in her black eyes. "Smell anything?" she asked.

"Only—only tuberoses and incense," said Grace wearily. She had grown infinitely tired of the beautiful, heavily-perfumed flower which somehow always reminded her of death, and the perpetual incense burning.

"I smell something else," said the negress shrewdly. "Chloroform!"

"Nonsense," said the girl impatiently.

Cassandra shrugged her shoulders and crossed over to the high, canopied bed upon which her mistress reclined, oblivious to everything about her. The black maid's cry of horror caused Grace to swing about and ask in a tense whisper:

"What is it? What has happened, Cassandra?"

"She's dead," wailed the maid, "dead and cold."

"Oh!" Grace went to her side, too shocked for the moment to realize that Del Monte's death meant release for her. The singer lay as if she were asleep. Her masses of blue-black hair tumbling about her thin silken-clad shoulders, one beautiful slender arm flung over her head, the lace falling from it and leaving it bare to the shoulder. The flush had not entirely left her face and lips, but the great dark eyes, staring at the ceiling, and an ugly blood-stain over her right breast, besmirching her silken gown and white coverlets, proclaimed only too conclusively that she was dead.

"She's been murdered," said Grace in an awe-stricken whisper. "Murdered while she slept."

"You were here with her all night," said the negress. The yellow gleam in her eyes caused Grace to shrink back in terror and cover her face with her hands. Only too well she felt the accusation in them, for Cassandra knew the hatred and fear she had felt for Del Monte, and combined with having been locked in all night with the Diva, would prove damning evidence against her.

"Yes, she's been murdered," said Cassandra in a strangely calm voice. "She didn't die a natural death, that's certain. What'll we do?"

"Call the police," said Grace suddenly. "I'll do it."

"I will," said the negress, pushing her aside. "You stay where you are."

Grace was too dazed and too utterly miserable to resent the black woman's attitude. She stood watching what had been the famous, beautiful Sheila Del Monte, with fascinated eyes, her pale face becoming pinched and drawn as the sinister meaning of the blood-stain on the white silk gown became indelibly impressed upon her. Del Monte had been murdered! Some one who hated her as much as she did had taken vengeance upon her while she slept; had risked her (Grace's) awakening and calling for help rather than forego revenge. But who? The windows were barred and locked, so access that way was impossible, and Del Monte had locked her door before retiring. But had she? Perhaps the door had been locked from the outside after the deed was done. Where was the key?

As she stood gazing at the rigid figure upon the bed, a new horror seized her, a fear that gripped her and tore at her very soul as even the thought of murder itself had not done. For the moment the insane panic which swept over her caused her to grow blind and the room to swim in hot, red flashes about her.

A great desire to reach the cheval glass and see for herself if the face mirrored there were indeed her own, battled with the fear that the Diva's predictions were indeed true and that her identity and features were blotted out with Del Monte's death. But her limbs seemed to be leaden, and her feet fettered by heavy chains. She could not move; try as she would, she could not tear herself from the spot, but stood staring hopelessly at the dead woman who had grown to spell everything that was terrible to her. Suddenly she began to laugh a low, sobbing laugh at first, which ended in a shrill cry of hysteria; she found she wanted to sing, and crushed her lips with her knuckles until they bled.

All the while she stood there Cassandra was at the telephone.

When the police arrived they were admitted by the black woman, who silently ushered them into the bed chamber. There they found a white-faced, dark-haired girl, standing silent, cold and rigid by the dead woman's bed.

CHAPTER NINE

WITH an effort Grace tore herself away from the bed, and in a cold monotone answered the questions the detectives put to her. A hasty scrutiny of the bed had immediately convinced Donovan that not only was Del Monte dead, but that she had met her death by foul play. The wound over her heart had been inflicted by a sharp-pointed knife, and the woman's death had been almost instantaneous.

Donovan, who was a large, raw-boned, red-haired Irishman, with a humorous twinkle in his yellow-brown eyes, which belied his gruff manner of speaking, had lost no time in reaching the house in the East Thirties when notified of the crime. He had given an audible sniff at the appearance of its interior, and for the instant amazement was depicted upon his immobile countenance. The bed-room, with its barred windows; the divan upon which Grace had slept; the whole atmosphere, the air heavily laden with incense, tuberoses, and now with the sickly sweet smell of chloroform, had staggered him. The dead woman herself, beautiful, placid, like an artist's masterpiece, was extraordinary, while the girl beside her, oblivious to all except the tragedy, her dark hair tumbling about her slender silken-clad shoulders, presented an unusual spectacle.

Cassandra snatched up an ivory-satin robe, which had been flung across a chair the night before, and draped it about Grace's shoulders. Without turning her eyes toward the black woman, Grace thrust her arms in the sleeves, murmuring "Thank you." A strange expression crept over Cassandra's face, and she shuddered as she looked at her mistress.

"Throw up the blinds," said Donovan authoritatively to his assistant, Larry Olden. "The place is as dark as a dungeon."

The light streamed in, and as the room was bathed in the morning sunshine, young Olden gave an exclamation which he quickly surpressed at a look from his superior officer. Stooping beside the bed, he picked up a metallic object and handed it to Donovan.

"That did the job," he said.

It proved to be a small ornamental dagger that Del Monte had used as a paper knife. The jeweled hilt was heavy and shaped like a dragon's head, but the blade was slim, sharp and dangerous, as the blood stains on it only too conclusively showed. Donovan looked at it carefully a moment, then laid it on the little night table beside the bed. He glanced at the black maid as he did so, then at the silent figure of madame's protégé.

"Take a look around, Larry," he said quietly, "while I talk to the girl." Larry obeyed, his chief's watchful eye following him as he scrutinized the carpet, articles of

furniture, the barred windows and window-casings, although interrogating Grace at the same time.

"Sit down," he said quietly, seeing she was swaying under the strain. She obeyed in a subconscious manner, clasping and unclasping her white hands and staring at him with great, horror-stricken, blue eyes. He motioned to Cassandra to stay where she was, giving his medical examiner, who entered the room during the interview, accompanied by a reporter and two plain-clothes men, a curt nod and a wave of the hand.

"Your name?" he said to Grace not unkindly.

"Grace Mathers."

"Live here?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long?"

Grace shuddered. "Almost two years."

"No relation of Madame Del Monte?"

"No, no; oh, no."

"How does it come you are here in her room?" he said, drawing a chair up and facing her.

"I sleep here." She raised her hand wearily and pushed back a lock of hair that had fallen over her forehead.

"Sleep here!" he ejaculated. "With a big house like this she had you sleep in her own room? What was the idea?"

Grace looked helplessly at Cassandra, but the maid's lips were closed in a rigid line. Evidently she was anxiously waiting to be questioned herself.

"Why did madame have you sleep in her apartment?" repeated the inspector. "Were you such close friends?"

"No; oh, no," whispered the girl hoarsely. "I—I was her prisoner."

"Prisoner!" Donovan rose abruptly. "Think what you're saying, young woman."

"I was! I was!" shrilled the girl, her dull eyes growing wild with excitement. "For three months I've slept in this room, eaten in this room, lived in this room. Staring at the shadows on the wall, staring at the barred windows. Waiting to get away. Oh, my God, how I've wanted to get away, but she wouldn't let me. She kept me here and laughed at me. Dared me to kill myself. Drove me mad for want of freedom!". Her voice rose into a hysterical cry, attracting the attention of the other men in the room, who gathered about the inspector.

Donovan looked incredulous, but turning abruptly to the negress beside him, said:

"Is this true?"

"It's Gawd's truth," she replied, rolling her eyes. "I had to lock her in when madame was away, and madame locked her in when she was here alone, except at night. This door wasn't never locked, only the hall door, and, anyway, she couldn't get away. Kaldah slept by the door leading to the hallway."

"Where is Kaldah?" said Donovan, turning around. Cassandra shook her head. "Send some one for him," Donovan continued, addressing Larry. "Any other servants?" he added, to the black woman.

"Yes, sir; the chauffeur, Ames, and the cook, Marcella. Shall I fetch 'em?"

"No. Larry, tell that fellow to send in the chauffeur and the cook."

As both Marcella and Ames were in the hallway, standing near the door in an effort to hear what was taking place inside, it was not hard to locate them, but the officer Larry had sent to find Kaldah returned shortly, saying the black man was not in the house.

"Hm," said Donovan. "Any idea where he is?" to Cassandra.

"No. sir. Sometimes he goes out for a walk 'fore madame is up; guess likely he's done that now." Cassandra spoke glibly enough, but her hands twitched nervously at the garment she wore.

"What's he like?" asked the inspector. Cassandra's description of her fellow-employee was vivid enough, for Kaldah's unusual personality bore description. As she spoke, Donovan jotted down notes, later instructing one of the plain-clothes men to go below and keep an eye open for the man in case he returned.

Marcella, also large, black, and anything but ornamental, stood cowering within the confines of the room, her queer, crooked features working spasmodically, while her black eyes roved restlessly as she looked for the first time upon her mistress' intimate quarters. When Donovan endeavored to question her he discovered she was deaf and dumb, and although apparently bright enough, from the expression on her face, he ran up against a stonewall so far as any information was concerned.

"Here, Cornish," he said to one of his men, "you know the dummy lingo. Ask this woman what she knows."

After a few moments' silent questioning, Cornish informed the inspector that the woman was ignorant of anything save that she had just learned her mistress was dead; that she had never been upstairs during her two years' employment with madame, and had absolutely no knowledge of the crime.

"Think she's telling the truth, too," he vouchsafed as he finished.

The chauffeur, upon being questioned, answered practically the same thing. He had sleeping quarters over the garage, just behind the house, and had come in to breakfast a short time ago, when the general excitement had drawn him upstairs, where he learned a tragedy had taken place.

"You both may go," said Donovan, dimissing him and the cook. "Don't leave the house, though; I'll want you again, maybe. Now, what do you know?" he continued, turning to Cassandra.

"I'm her maid," said the black woman without a quaver in her voice. Her large figure seemed to grow in proportions and take on a majesty that her skin, nor servial garment, could not suppress. "I've worked for her since I was a tiny girl—maybe forty years or more."

"Ye-es?" There was a hint of a question in Donovan's voice as he glanced at the youthful figure on the bed and at the grizzled black woman before him.

"I know she looks young," said the woman, reading his thoughts, "but she ain't—no, she's old; old as her sinful soul."

"I take it you didn't like her either," said the inspector.

Cassandra smiled—it was an evil smile—and she said slowly, with all the venom of accumulating years: "No, I hated her, just as she hates her, as every one hates her, and I'm glad she's dead. I'm glad of it!"

"You didn't kill her?"

Cassandra laughed, but did not lose her composure. "No. Why for should I kill her? If I'd been wanting to kill her I'd a-done it ten, twenty years ago, when I was young and had something ahead of me. No; she paid me well; I was sure of a home with her, and I didn't hate her enough for that."

"Why did you hate her if she was a good mistress?"

Cassandra looked at him blankly for a moment, her face became a sickly yellow. She glanced up at the barred windows, at the flickering shadows, the sunlight cast upon the wall, and then back at the dead woman. She swallowed before speaking, and her voice was husky with fear.

"Because of the ha'nts," she whispered.

"Ha'nts!" ejaculated the inspector. "What d'ye mean?"

At the word, Grace had moved uneasily. She raised her eyes and looked into the depths of Cassandra's black, glowing ones.

"I can't tell you," the black woman whispered. "I'm scared to tell you."

"Well, I'll be ——" Donovan whistled. "Do you know what she means?" he asked Grace.

She nodded assent. "Ghosts," she whispered, "the haunting souls of the dead."

Donovan gave a jeering laugh. "Well, come on, we're getting no place," he said impatiently. "If you didn't kill your mistress, tell us what you know about it."

Cassandra brightened. "Every morning, 'long about ten o'clock, I used to fetch breakfast in for both madame and Miss Grace; that's why the door ain't never locked. This morning I came up the stairs with the tray, same as usual. I set it on the stand in the hall while I turns the door-knob, but the knob wouldn't turn. I tries it, but it won't open. I thinks that's funny, but knowing madame is always likely to be doing something different, it didn't worry me much, so I knocked. I didn't get any answer. I kept on knocking—then I got scared."

"Why didn't you call some of the other servants?" said the inspector.

"'Cause, as I was turning to go away to do it, I saw a key lying on the rug in front of the door. I picked it up, tried it in the lock, and found it opened the door. Here it is." She extended the key towards him.

"Go on," he said, taking it.

"The room was pitch-dark, as it always is, but it smelled funny to me. I waked Miss Grace first, I generally do. She was sleeping mighty heavy—that was strange, 'cause she most always awoke when I come in. I had to shake her to wake her up. I asked her why she locked the door; she said she hadn't. Then I said I smelled chloroform; she said she didn't. Then I saw madame was dead—and sent for you."

"You are positive this young lady was asleep when you entered the room?"

"Positive."

"And she had been alone with Madame Del Monte all night?"

"Yes, sir. She always was since she tried to get away, three months ago."

"She had good reason to dislike Del Monte?"

"She sure had."

"Do you ever remember seeing this before?" He lifted the jeweled dagger and held it so she could easily see it.

"Yes, sir; I sure do. Hit came to madame in a bunch of red roses about six months ago. I recollect she turned pale as death when she saw it, and read the note that was fastened to it, but she laughed and tore the note up. Since then she's used the knife as a paper-cutter—it was always around somewheres when she was opening mail or cutting magazines."

"In a bunch of roses, eh? Have you any idea what the letter contained?"

Cassandra hesitated before replying, evidently weighing her words.

"Yes, sir," she said at last, "I know just what it said, 'cause I put the scraps together. I can't just recollect the exact words, but it was signed 'Mimi', and it said that that dagger would sooner or later 'cause her death."

"Hm!" Donovan looked at the knife several seconds before he laid it down on the table. "Have you any idea who 'Mimi' was?"

Again Cassandra's face took on the sickly yellow hue. "Ye-yes, sir—she is a ha'nt."

"Come, come!" he exclaimed angrily. "Do you mean that a dead woman wrote that note?"

"I don't mean nothing. You asked me who Mimi was. Mimi is dead! She's been dead five years—'fore Gawd, she has, mister. She killed herself in this here room five years ago, and she's a ha'nt now—'fore Gawd she is. That's why madame kept that knife. She knowed a ha'nt had sent it, and she wasn't afraid of no ha'nts—jest us black folks was, but I know she orter not kept it. I knowed it!" Her voice broke into a wail, and she dropped suddenly into a nearby chair, rocking her body backward and forward in an agony of terror.

"So you think a dead woman came into this room and killed your mistress?" said Donovan grimly.

"I don't think nothing," she replied. "But I know no live person could get in them barred windows, nor through the door past Kaldah, could they? And she's dead from the dagger, ain't she?"

Donovan wheeled about and addressed the physician, who had been examining Del Monte. "Murder, unquestionably?" he asked.

"Yes; dead hours," was the reply.

For a few moments the officers of the law held a whispered consultation, Larry giving the information that absolutely no marks had been found on the windows, no blood stains, nor finger-prints anywhere. The deep velvet nap of the carpet showed impressions of boot-prints, but as innumerable shoes had trampled upon it time and again, no knowledge was to be gained that way. Aside from the dagger, dropped beside the bed, and an almost illusive odor of anesthetics, there was no clue to the murder.

"Miss Mathers—I think that's your name, isn't it?" Donovan said, turning to Grace, "will you please tell me all you know about the murder, and why you came to be Madame Del Monte's prisoner?"

But apparently she did not hear him. With unseeing eyes she rose, slowly, painfully, letting the ivory-satin robe drop off her shoulders as she moved across the room with an undulating gliding movement past the men who stared at her in bewilderment. Utterly oblivious to their presence, she paused before the long pier glass, flung back her hair, and stared deep into her reflection there. Then she laughed a low, throaty chuckle that startled even Donovan, seasoned veteran of the police as he was. As the laugh died, she thrust forward her head and started to sing, her voice a childish treble, pathetic in its sweetness, tragic in its limitations. For a moment she seemed puzzled that no greater volume of music issued from her throat, then, with a cry, almost of relief, she flung her arms upward and fell in a death-like faint before her reflected image.

CHAPTER TEN

TOM STEEL had immediately realized that Grace would be placed in a perilous position through Del Monte's murder. Though as yet he had not ascertained the girl's position in regard to the singer, he knew that if ever she were to need a friend, that time had come. He had contrived to follow the police to the singer's home, but had found the doors closed to him, and he had been left fruitlessly kicking at the stone steps which led to the entrance, and conjecturing what was taking place within. He cursed himself for being all kinds of a fool at not insisting he was a reporter, to gain admittance, and he decided he would ring the door-bell again and see if he couldn't, by

the ruse, get in. As he reached this decision, a huge orientally-clad negro stepped upon the stoop beside him and started to insert a key in the lock. Tom immediately recognized him as Kaldah, madame's bodyguard.

"Hey, Kaldah," he exclaimed. The negro turned towards him, showing no recognition in his glance. "Let me in with you," Tom continued. "I've got to get the details for my paper."

"Details—papers?" said the negro, a puzzled expression flitting across his blank face.

"Yes; don't you know—good Lord, man—don't you know your mistress is dead?"

"Dead!" The key dropped to the stone floor with a metallic clatter. Tom stooped hastily, picked it up, and, unlocking the door, entered the house, leaving the servant staring at him in amazement.

The noise of voices coming from the floor above guided him to where he wished to go. He reached the scene just in time to see Grace crumple upon the floor, and regardless of the staring group, he darted across the room and lifted her senseless form in his arms.

"What have you been doing to her?" he cried fiercely, his young face ablaze at what he regarded as her tormentors.

"Who are you?" demanded the inspector.

"She's going to marry me!" He placed her tenderly on the divan and knelt beside her, chafing her wrists and murmuring endearments in low whispers.

"Get some brandy," said Donovan to Larry. "We must bring her to."

The officer who had been stationed to watch for Kaldah now came, bringing him in, and as he was being questioned, Tom was allowed the task of reviving Grace.

The black man was so obviously startled and surprised at Del Monte's death that Donovan dismissed him without much questioning. It was as Cassandra had said. He had simply gone for a morning walk and had no knowledge whatsoever that his mistress was dead until informed so by the young man on the steps outside.

The girl was the person in whom the inspector was most interested.

"A motive and an opportunity," he muttered. "We have both in her case."

As Grace revived the light of reason returned to her eyes. Her first exclamation was a sob, "Thank God! Thank God!" Then seeing Tom's good-natured, adoring face close to hers, she smiled and let him draw her close into his arms as though his embrace was the most natural thing in the world.

"If you feel equal to it, miss," said Donovan, "I'd like to ask you some more questions."

"Yes, sir," she said softly. She clung to Tom in a helpless, frantic manner, and he kept patting her shoulder and murmuring reassuringly: "There, there, dear; there, there."

"I—can't we go somewhere else? I want to get out of this room, away from her," she said pleadingly.

"Sure," said Donovan. "Station a man here, Larry. The rest of you can come with me. We'll go into the drawing-room, below."

Grace looked fearfully about her, then laid her hand on the inspector's arm. "Can't we be alone?" she whispered, "just we three? What I want to tell you, I'd rather they didn't hear, the reporter and all; they wouldn't understand. You won't either, but you must know it. I couldn't stand to have it in the papers, and people knowing and discussing it. It doesn't sound real, you know."

"Just as you like," said the inspector indulgently. "I'll keep them up here until you've spilled your story, if it isn't too long. Hey, you," he exclaimed suddenly as he caught Cassandra in the act of examining madame's writing-desk, "don't you know you're not to touch anything? What do you mean by that?"

The woman turned to him triumphantly, her eyes gleaming. "Here it is; I found it!" she chuckled.

"What?"

"It's her picture—Mimi's." She handed a small framed photograph to the officer. "I knowed she had one some place."

The features of dark-eyed, laughing girl greeted him from the bit of cardboard. A wealth of curls tumbled about bared, exquisitely-formed shoulders, draped with a cloud of some white fleecy material. Though the lips were parted in a wide smile, there was a hint of tragedy in the dark eyes, and a wealth of intensity, which bespoke of a strong emotional nature.

"You are sure she is dead?" he asked the servant.

"Sure! I went to her funeral."

"I'll keep this," said the inspector.

"Let me see it," said Tom suddenly. For some reason Donovan graciously permitted him to look at it. The boy gave a low whistle, and looked up, quizzically, at the black woman.

"Who is she?" he said.

"Mimi," she answered, grown sullen for no apparent reason. "She's dead!"

"Mimi who?"

"I dunno. I never knowed her other name. She lived with madame just like Miss Grace."

"Mimi nothing!" snapped Tom. "If this isn't a picture of Angela Callendar it's one of her twin sister, and she wasn't dead day before yesterday." A yellow gleam shot from Cassandra's black eyes; she made a move as though to take the picture from him, but the inspector interposed and pocketed it instead.

"Who is this Angela—what's her name?" he asked.

"A little dancer, and a peach of a girl. I may be mistaken, of course, but it surely looks like her," Tom replied.

"We'll look her up," said Donovan. "You can give me her address later." To Cassandra he said: "You stay here. I think you've something more to tell me."

He led the way down the stairs, while Tom, supporting Grace, followed. Switching on the lights in the darkened drawing-room, he motioned them to be seated and bade Grace proceed with her story.

Before Grace started speaking, it suddenly dawned upon her that Cassandra had lied; lied to the police when she said she had found her asleep, when she had awakened and had admitted her into the room. Vaguely she remembered Cassandra saying she, herself, had unlocked the door with a key she had found on the floor, and that she had to shake the girl to awaken her. Grace wondered at the black woman's duplicity, then decided she had told the untruth to save her—her loyalty puzzled her, for before the arrival of the police the woman had unquestionably shown hostility and suspicions toward her. What had caused the change?

"What difference does it make, anyway?" she said to herself. "They'll learn the truth now, and that is all that counts."

"Wonder if we can't get some fresh air in this place," said Donovan with disgust at the perfumed odor which greeted his nostrils. "It's enough to put you out of commission, the sicky, sweet smell everywhere."

He pulled aside the black velvet draperies, and tugged at the windows, long closed and locked. They refused to budge, and he was compelled to abandon his idea, and in-

stead flung open the hall and street doors. "Now, Miss Mathers," he said, after lighting a cigar and extending one to Tom, "shoot!"

For some time before speaking, Grace stared at the wall opposite her, a spot of red burning vividly in each cheek, and her eyes glowed as though a fever were consuming her.

"I hope you will believe me when I say I was neither insane nor a stage-struck girl when I entered into a compact with Sheila Del Monte," she said, "for, incredulous as it may all seem to you, I was quite in my right mind, and though her proposition at first seemed to me an impossibility, the force of her magnetism, will-power, or hypnotic influence—call it what you will—made me see the feasibility of it, and believe that what she suggested could come to pass." She paused as though waiting for one or the other of the men to speak, but as they both remained silent, waiting for her to continue, she did so.

"Back home, in the small town from where I came, they had told me I could sing. I thought I could. My parents were poor. I had visions of brightening their last days with luxuries, comforts, of which they never dreamed. I let them sacrifice everything to send me here, feeling certain that with my voice I could repay them again and again. I guess my story so far is like that of thousands of others. Anyway, I not only did not set the world afire—I simply could not secure employment to sing. My voice was not big enough, not good enough, that was all.

When I realized that I could never repay father for what he had done, I became bitter, wretched, unhappy. I secured work in a cloak and suit house, and scrimped and saved in every way possible. Denying myself ordinary necessities that I might send money home, I kept up a pretense of success to them all the time. Night after night I cried myself to sleep, tired, unnerved, wretched.

"I'm telling you this so that you may know the state of mind I was in when I met Madame Del Monte. I learned she was a singer, a famous one, and naturally that fascinated me. When she asked me to come to her home, I was flattered and delighted to do so. I told her of my ambitions and disappointments, and she—she more than sympathized with me. It was then—then she suggested this thing."

Again Grace hesitated, her slender figure quivered, and her eyes dilated. With a long-drawn breath, almost a sob, she continued:

"Del Monte's voice was glorious; she was beautiful. You saw how beautiful she was. She hated death. I've never known any one who talked about it so much as she did—it was an obsession with her. She would cry and have hysteria at the thought of dying, but it was not just the passing on that troubled her, it was that with death would come the destruction of her beautiful body, the silencing of her voice. She didn't care particularly about the soul, understand, nor the actual dissolution. It was that she, as the world knew her, would sink into oblivion. That's how she talked to me the first day I met her, her hot hands clasping mine, her black eyes burning into my very soul until I saw things as she saw them, and became convinced as she was convinced.

"She argued that inasmuch as her will-power had conquered age, keeping her youthful in spite of the passing of years; that that will-force could sway death to a degree, and that she could not only perpetuate her beauty, but her voice. She was racked and torn with consumption, yet she could sing—sing better than any one else on the stage to-day. She declared that in doing so she had that far conquered disease. When she met me and learned of my ambition, she realized I was the one person for whom she had been searching, the one to help her cheat death. I was to live with her constantly, to, in every way, absorb her personality, to develop all her mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, while she was to use all her will-force upon me, so that at the moment of her material death her soul, together with her beauty and voice, were to pass from her dying body into my live, healthy one."

"Good God!" ejaculated the inspector.

"I know it seems incredulous to you," said the girl with a weary smile. "It does to me, now, but if you had been in my position, if Del Monte herself had argued with you, it would not have seemed so. She was so positive it could be done, her spirit was so dominant, so terribly, wildly alive, she laid such plans, took such infinite care to carry it out. It seemed wonderful, marvelous to me, although even in the beginning, awful. Day by day I was to grow like her, so that when she passed on it would be my body which they buried, and hers which continued to live! Oh, it was an insane idea; the woman was mad, absolutely mad, as I soon learned, but at first I was only too glad to enter into the compact, just as several others had done."

"Others?" The inspector leaned forward breathlessly.

"Yes; later I learned that, too. It had killed them. The girl Mimi was one—she took her own life, just as I wanted to do, but was afraid. The awfulness of the place, the insanity of Del Monte, the imprisonment, and their weak wills battling against her stronger one, drove them mad. When I begged to go, tried to escape, she used to laugh at me and tell me about them. Mimi, who killed herself; Susan, who had died of heart failure, and Alice, who had tried to kill her, and whom she had strangled."

"I'll be damned!" Donovan sprang to his feet. "It is incredible! I can't believe it. You are positive of this?"

"Oh, yes. Cassandra can tell you the same, if she will. Only she believes in the supernatural—just as I did at first. She believes that the dancing shadows on the wall are the spirits of the dead girls, the girls, who, like myself, were willing to barter their bodies and souls for Del Monte's fame and beauty. At times I fancied that those shadows were unhappy souls also; that wicked spirits lurked around madame everywhere. I think I went a little mad myself when she'd taunt me and laugh at me—daring me to kill her, saying that in so doing my end would come and her life in me begin. She'd point to the shadows and call them by name, then she'd make me look at my reflection in the mirror and see the resemblance to herself, until I'd go wild with frenzy and beg her to let me go. I know now it was all the insane delusion of a crazy woman, who dominated every one about her with her superior will-power; but under her influence I believed that she could do what she predicted. She used to have maniacal attacks, when she became a raving mad animal. Cassandra called them 'ha'nts', and thought the spirits were working on her."

"Why didn't you try to get away, or summon assistance?" asked Donovan, only half convinced of the truth of her story.

"I did," she replied. "After I tried to escape (Mr. Steel was to help me), she made me an absolute prisoner, in that room. I couldn't write letters, nor receive any. I was utterly helpless."

"You didn't kill her?" Donovan asked abruptly.

She shook her head. "No, I didn't kill her," she said without changing her tone. "I loathed her, and wanted her death, but I was afraid that if she died our compact would become fulfilled, as she had foretold—that I would become, in reality, Sheila Del Monte and she Grace Mathers. You see, she filled me with her obsession until

it became a reality to me, and I would rather have died myself than perpetuate her. But, thank God, she is dead, and I'm free! Free! Myself again!" She burst into tears and sobbed aloud.

Donovan coughed in embarrassment, looked questioningly at Tom, then closed the hall-door, locking it.

"Gimme the address of that Angela person," he said. "I'm going to look her up. Meantime, you can stay with her—don't you, either one, leave here. I don't want to arrest her, but if she tries to get away I may have to."

He wrote the address on a bit of cardboard, and going upstairs, left Grace with her lover.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANGELA CALLENDAR lived in a bijou duplex apartment just off Central Park West, a box of a place, hung in gay-colored chintz, and filled with feminine knick-knacks characteristic of women of her class. Yellow predominated in everything, from the satin-finished wall-paper to the wicker bird-cage by the window-box. Angela herself, in a canary-colored, corn-flowered, embroidered kimono was being served her breakfast, although the hour was past one, when Captain Donovan was announced.

She puckered her full-lippel scarlet mouth and looked askance at her maid who had answered the telephone.

"Donovan? Donovan?" she murmured. "Don't know the man. Let him come up, Ellice, and you have a look at him; if he isn't too ferocious, and seems warranted not to bite, I may see him." She laughed gaily over her coffee cup at the country girl who had become her maid, and had graduated from plain Alice to Ellice, but who had not quite gotten used to her mistress' manner of speech, nor way of doing things.

Angela gathered her robe about her, snatched up a roll and vanished into her bedroom as the door-bell rang; but she wasn't quite prepared for the pale face Ellice presented when a moment later she followed her.

"He's—he's a policeman!" gasped the maid, "and he says he's got to see you. He showed me a badge."

"My Gawd!" laughed Angela, "you'd think he'd tried to eat you, from the expression on your face. What's one policeman more or less in New York? Can't abide them myself, but I hear they are choice delicacies with a certain class of servant girls."

She leisurely powdered her nose, added a touch of rouge to her cheeks, carefully shaped her eyebrows; then throwing aside the kimono, clad her slender, well-shaped body in a cool, very attractive morning gown, no doubt laughing at the fuming officer impatiently waiting for her appearance. That Donovan was duly impressed was evinced by his smile of appreciation. She was good to look at, her dark, glowing beauty, enhanced by the amber frame she had built for herself. There was something vivid and intensely alive about her, from the crown of her crinkly-haired head to the tips of her small, arched feet.

"Captain Donovan?" she said smilingly.

"Yes."

"I don't think I know you, do I?" she stared quizzically at him, and continued rapidly, without giving him a chance to reply: "One meets so many persons in my profession, you know. I've been wondering if you were an old acquaintance, or if I am going to make a charming new one."

"We haven't met before, Miss Callendar," replied Donovan, ignoring the last half of her speech, "and if you don't mind I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"Why," she laughed, a bit nervously, seating herself with a quick, bird-like movement, on a nearby chaise longue, "I don't think I quite understand. Isn't it, to say the least, somewhat unusual for a stranger to call upon a lady and request replies to questions?"

"I'm from police headquarters," said Donovan grimly. "Didn't your maid tell you?"

"No, she didn't tell me." Angela primped up her mouth into a Cupid's bow. "She's very stupid. Are you a detective? How interesting! Do you know, I never met one before, and I've always adored detective stories. Of course, that changes the complexion of things entirely. I'll be delighted to answer any questions in my power. Shoot—er, I mean go on."

Donovan looked at her. His yellow-brown eyes smiled. "I'll shoot," he said. "To begin with, do you know Sheila Del Monte?"

"Sheila Del Monte, the opera singer? No, I never met her. I've heard her often enough, though. She's a wonderful singer."

"She'll never sing again," said Donovan grimly. "She's dead!"

"Dead!" gasped the little dancer. "Now, isn't that too bad! She was young, too, wasn't she? At least she looked young from the front. Well, certainly I am sorry to hear it. Real voices are few and far between, and——"

"Do you know Tom Steel?" interrupted the inspector.

"Tommy Steel? Well, I should say I do. Tommy and I worked together in Lawrence's 'Flying Fish' Co. Tom's a lovely chap; I adore him. I've not seen him for ages, and only yesterday I was wondering what had become of him. In New York you certainly do lose track of people. Tom wasn't a bit theatrical, though I thought him terribly clever. I had an idea he had quit the business and settled down somewhere. Why?"

"Del Monte was murdered," said Donovan quietly.

"Murdered!" Angela's pinky face became a trifle pale. "Oh, good gracious. How terrible! Don't tell me Tommy Steel had anything to do with it!"

"No; he had nothing to do with it."

The inspector reached in his vest pocket and pulled out the picture Cassandra had given him. "Ever see this before?" he said casually.

Angela's eyes widened as she stared at it. She ran her little tongue over her lips as though they had suddenly become very dry; then she giggled. "It looks like me, doesn't it?" she asked, "very, very like me, but I'll swear I never had a picture like it. Who is she?"

"Her name was Mimi they told me, and she is dead. You never knew her?"

"Good gracious, no!" Angela flung her arms over her head in girlish abandon. "Mimi! Sounds like a foreigner. Rather awful, isn't it, to have some one look so much like you—sort of uncanny. Do you know, I'm glad she's dead!" She laid the photograph on a table beside her, but Inspector Donovan extended his hand for it, saying dryly:

"I'll take it, if you please. I might go away without it, and that wouldn't do at all."

"No, it wouldn't, would it?" laughed Angela. "Oh, must you go?" she exclaimed as he rose. "I was in hopes you could stay a while and tell me all about detecting and—and the police. I'm so interested—and about Sheila Del Monte, too."

"Sorry; some other time, perhaps. You are a dancer, aren't you; Miss Callendar?"

"Oh, yes; at the Folly; with "The Amber Girl". Come see me, won't you?" She extended her hand cordially.

"Sure; I'll be glad to. Good-by."

As the door closed behind him, Angela gave it a vicious little kick, making a mouth at him. "Nasty beast!" she sputtered. "Ugh! I'd like to choke you."

Outside on the street, Donovan glanced upward, then crossing to the nearest telephone booth, he called up police headquarters and instructed a detective to keep an eye on the apartment house in which Angela Callendar lived, as he wanted that lady shadowed.

As Tom had foreseen, Del Monte's death meant more trouble for Grace. While she was not actually placed in custody, she was requested to remain where she was, and Larry stayed behind to see that orders were obeyed until the truth of her story was investigated. Cassandra was questioned and cross-questioned, but everything she said corroborated what Grace had said. She declared the girl Mimi had died by her own hand; that two others who had lived with madame had also died; but she said heart failure had been the cause of death in both cases. She had known of the compact between Del Monte and Grace, for Mimi had explained to her why she was living with the singer, and when Grace arrived she knew Grace was there for the same reason.

Later a decision of murder in the first degree was rendered, with the guilty person unknown.

After the detectives had left Grace alone, Tom turned impulsively toward her, saying, in a voice husky with emotion:

"Girl dear, you've only known me but a little while, but I believe that time has shown you can trust me. You need a man's protection now, dear, and love. I don't have to tell you I love you, you know it already, and if you're willing to marry me, I'll give you the protection. We're going to have a fight ahead of us, honey, and I want the right to be with you in it through thick and thin, to be by your side all the time. What d'ye say, dear?"

For answer she laid her hand upon his, smiling wistfully at him. "You're so good," she said chokingly, "so wonderfully good. What would I have done without you? But, oh, my dear, I can't marry you while the least suspicion hangs over me; it wouldn't be fair to you. I couldn't do it, much as I love you."

"Hurrah!" he cried, catching her in his arms. "You've admitted you love me, and if you do, you haven't a ghost of a chance to get away from me. I'm going to get a license, and before you can know it, you are going to be Mrs. Tommy Steel, riveted tight to me for life. How's that for a pun?"

Grace laughed. "My will is as weak as water," she said. She nestled contentedly in his arms, for the time being thrusting aside all the horrors that had gone before, and the troubles which were brewing. The boy ran a trembling hand over her nut-brown hair, and then, very tenderly kissed her. "I'll be good to you," he whispered. "Please God, I'll be good to you."

The same evening, Donovan, after finishing a lonely meal in a dairy lunch-room, decided to go to the Folly Theatre and watch Angela Callendar dance. The girl had impressed him both favorably and the opposite. There was something elusive and baffling about her personality, regardless of the decided resemblance she bore to the picture of dead Mimi. Though her answers had been glib enough, the detective was willing to wager that she had known the original of the photograph.

"Queer little minx," he muttered, as he formed in line at the box-office. Once seated, a disappointment was in store for him, for when the curtain was raised a man came upon the stage and announced that Miss Callendar had suddenly been taken ill, and was unable to appear.

"Wonder what the dope is?" said Donovan to himself, leaving the theatre. "Guess I'll go back-stage and find out if it's temperament, or if she really is ill."

At the sight of his badge he was admitted, where he found the manager and stage manager fuming at the dancer's non-appearance; not only had she not arrived at the theatre in time for the performance, but when they had telephoned her hotel to inquire why she was late, the clerk informed them that Miss Callendar had left the hotel before dinner-time, checking out and taking all her baggage, after requesting them to purchase tickets to Buffalo for her and her maid!

CHAPTER TWELVE

TOM was determined not to leave Grace in the big, shadowy house, and when she returned to the bright, sunshiny little room which had been hers before Del Monte had taken her into her own apartment, he threw himself down on the great divan, and after smoking a cigarette, endeavored to get some sleep. The creaking of floors, and the sound of footsteps pacing back and forth over his head were disconcerting. He almost fancied he could see the spirit of the dead woman wandering about in search of an earthly habitation; some beautiful body in which to lodge. He laughed at the shivers which would chase up and down his spine, knowing well that the footsteps he heard belonged to either the detective who had been left in charge, or the servants.

Once young Larry came to the door and looked in. "Hello," he said. "You here? What's the idea?"

Tom laughed sheepishly. "I'm Miss Mather's fiancé!" he said. "She's been alone long enough in this house of horrors."

"You struck it, bo," said the officer. "Horrors is right. I don't mind a well-regulated corpse, but I confess this place and that woman upstairs has got me jumpy. I guess it's the tales that black dame keeps spillin'—all about spirits and ha'nts. She's sure bugs, though I don't blame her much if she's lived here long."

"Where is she now?" asked Tom.

"We sent her off to bed. She's safe enough; she's too scared of her own shadow to do anything."

Tom wasn't so sure of that, but held his own counsel. "D'ye think she killed Del Monte?" he asked, more to continue the conversation than because he desired information.

"No; hadn't anything to do with it. Good-night. Hope you sleep well."

For a long time Tom lay in the darkness, the wheels in his brain revolving like sixty-horse-power engines; his eyes staring into caverns of blackness. Now that the turmoil had subsided and he had time to think, he began to wonder if Grace had killed Del Monte! He felt no treachery toward the girl at the thought, for, undoubtedly, she was justified, and the crime would make no difference in his love for her; but he must know, to ascertain what course of action to pursue. The jangling of the door-bell startled him unpleasantly, and rising quickly, he fumbled about in the darkness to find a light, preparatory to answering it. It rang again before he reached it, at the same time a huge clock behind him boomed three times.

"What the deuce is it? What does any one want at this time of the night?" Curiosity made him desire to reach the hall before a servant did.

But the house was now in utter silence; no movements came from above or behind him; apparently he was the only person to have heard that metallic clamor. After what seemed ages to him, he found an electric light switch, which he turned, and the light guided him into the hallway. A messenger-boy with a telegram stood outside the door.

"Does Cas—Cas—whatever is it, Depreez, live here?" the boy asked.

Before replying, Tom took the yellow envelope from him and read the name written upon it. It was addressed to Cassandra Depreez.

"Yes; she lives here," he said. "I'll sign for it."

After the messenger had left, Tom stood holding the telegram in his hand, debating whether to call Cassandra or not. He did not know where she was sleeping, nor which bell to ring for her—yet unquestionably a telegram delivered at that hour in the morning was of importance. Then he noticed that it was not sealed. For a moment he hesitated, then he drew the folded slip out of its casing and scanned the typewritten words:

"Come to 672 East 13th Street at once. Ask for Mrs. Green. MIMI."

"Mimi!" he whistled. "I'll be damned! More spooks? Or is everything the black woman said a lie! I wonder if I should hand this over to the officer or give it to Cassandra?"

On second thought he decided to give it to Cassandra, and do a little sleuthing himself. However, he figured, morning would be time enough for the black woman to have her message, and in the meantime he determined to go himself to 672 East 13th Street, and ask for Mrs. Green. He realized it was a foolhardy thing to do, for he was unarmed, the neighborhood was squalid and unpleasant, to say the least, if not actually dangerous, and the house an eerie one, but Tom was nothing if not courageous. With the telegram in his vest pocket, his cap pulled down over his eyes, and coat collar turned up about his neck, he quietly stole out of the house.

It was very dark outside, not a star to be seen anywhere, the night air was chilly and went to the marrow of his bones. The streets were absolutely deserted, not even a lone taxi or a cabby about. Walking rapidly east, he boarded a street-car on Third avenue, after waiting for some time for one to appear. Aside from one man asleep in a corner, he was the only passenger. The conductor sleepily took his fare, and carried him a block past 13th street. When he alighted, Tom struck off briskly in the direction of the river. He glanced uneasily into the narrow side streets as he passed them, little better than dark, evil-smelling alleyways, like caverns filled with humanity. He didn't know what danger might be lurking in the black doorways, behind the ash-cans and empty truck wagons. A solitary policeman, leisurely trudging along, swinging his club, gave him a relieved sense of companionship. "Where is 672 East?" he inquired, stopping. The officer scanned him closely, taking in all the details of his well-fitting garments, evidently puzzled at his appearance in the locality, before replying, "Next block; about the fourth house, right-hand side."

There was a light burning on the ground floor, which acted as a guide for Tom in finding the number, but he hesitated about knocking, almost wishing he had fetched the officer with him. Glancing across the street he saw that the policeman had followed him and was watching his movements from the support of a friendly lamp-post.

"Guess I'm safe," he chuckled, "the cop's got an eye on me." He found a bell on the right side of the door, which he pushed, trusting to luck that it was the right one; a few seconds later he heard footsteps. They sounded like the patter of French heels worn by a woman, running. As the door opened he heard a cry of dismay, but before it could be slammed in his face, he thrust his foot against it, and then wedged his body inside. A young woman faced him—an attractive, well-dressed woman with crinkly black hair falling about her shoulders, and wide, terrified, brown eyes.

Good God! Angela Callendar!" he exclaimed.

She shook her head. "No," she said in a throaty whisper. "You mistake; you're looking for some one, yes? She doesn't live here."

He caught her wrist, pulling out the telegram at the same time. "Are you Mimi? You sent this to Cassandra?"

The girl looked helplessly at him without endeavoring to draw away from his detaining grasp. "She couldn't come!" she exclaimed, a sob in her voice. "She sent you. Oh, what'll I do? What'll I do?"

"Angela," he cried angrily, "cut out the tragedy. I know you, and you know me; there's no use bluffing. I don't know why you're here, nor what the dark maid is to you, but you would do well to admit your identity, for just now the police are searching for Mimi to arrest her for the murder of Sheila Del Monte!"

It was supposition on Tom's part, but the shot told; for an instant the girl swayed as though he had struck her, but she quickly regained her composure and the sangfroid manner which had impressed Captain Donovan.

"Well, suppose I am Angela Callendar?" she said. "What are you going to do about it, Tom Steel?"

"Find out why you've sent for Del Monte's maid to come to you and signed your name 'Mimi' to bring her. Mimi is a dead woman, and Cassandra fears the dead."

"You mean you are going to try to find out," said Angela with a little, jeering laugh. "That doesn't mean you will succeed."

"Oh, come, Angela, don't take that tone with me," Tom suddenly exclaimed, abandoning his cold attitude. "You and I have been friends for a good many years, and you know I don't want to do anything to hurt you. Sheila Del Monte has been murdered, and the girl I love has been detained under suspicion. I know she is innocent. Del Monte's black maid told the police how her mistress had received a dagger in a bunch of flowers together with a note threatening her life, and signed 'Mimi'. That same dagger caused her death. Now you send for Cassandra in a telegram also signed 'Mimi'. Cassandra has shown the detectives a picture supposed to be of 'Mimi', but certainly a likeness of you. Don't you see what you are letting yourself in for? I don't know whether you did, or didn't, kill her, but if a detective had intercepted that message instead of myself, things might have gone badly for you. Don't you think it would be wise to trust me, take me into your confidence?"

For reply Angela opened a door behind her and motioned him to follow her inside. "I can't talk to you out here in the hall," she said. "If we're going to have a confab we might as well sit down. I'd like to know how you came to get my telegram instead of Cassandra, and all about Del Monte's death. That fool cop to-day didn't tell me anything." She spoke in a low whisper, as though afraid of awakening the inmates of the house.

Tom stepped into the room after her. It was quite as dingy and ill-smelling as the hallway and the streets outside, and he wondered at a woman so dainty as Angela Callendar being housed in such a place. A smoky gas-jet gave a flickering light from one corner of the room, throwing its rays upon a cracked water pitcher and a

bowl on a wash-stand just below it; on the disordered iron bed, two dilapidated chairs, and a broken-down sofa. There was a moth-eaten red carpet on the floor, several discolored prints of the Savior and the Virgin on the wall, and a marble-topped table in the center of the room, on which were a bottle of beer, a box of crackers, and a jar of cheese.

"It isn't a pretty place, is it?" said Angela, sweeping aside some garments off one of the chairs, and bidding him be seated. "I never fancied it much myself, but considering I spent my childhood, and a good portion of my girlhood in the house, and that Mrs. Green has been about the only mother I ever knew, it sort of seems like home, even if it is beastly." She spoke defiantly, and Tom felt a surge of pity go over him. He visualized her as a girl, with her beauty-loving, luxurious temperament, in these sordid dirty surroundings, and shuddered.

"You were born here?" he asked softly.

"No. At least I don't think so. I think I was born in France, but I'm not certain," she laughed. "That's what makes me so bitter. Even my toy spaniel knows who his father and mother were. Callendar is no more my real name than it is yours. I'm just the usual orphan thing, with this difference: I did learn who my mother was—damn her! Oh, don't looked shocked. This filial thing gives me a pain. You're supposed to love some one you don't know, who deserts you because you'd publish her shame or interfere with her liberty, just because she brought you into the world through an accident and her selfish lust. I wasn't even a love-baby, for she was incapable of loving anything beside herself. Old Ma Green was good to me in her way. She loved me when she wasn't drinking. I've tried to repay her, but she still sticks here regardless of money, and it's damn lucky for me she did, or I wouldn't have known where to go. But here I'm telling you a lot of rot about myself, when I want you to tell me some things."

"No; go on," said Tom quietly. "I want to hear how you came to live here."

She sprang to her feet and paced the floor restlessly. "I guess it will do me good to get it out of my system," she said. "God knows I've kept it all bottled up long enough. Give me your word to keep still about it? Oh, it won't involve you, criminally," she added, seeing he hesitated, "it's just the sad, cruel story of my young life."

"You have my sacred promise," Tom answered solemnly.

"Thanks. Well, long about twenty-five—never mind how many years ago—a heavily-veiled woman come driving up here in a closed carriage, with an infant all swaddled in satin and furs—said infant being me. She dickered about my board and keep with Mrs. Green, who run a boarding-house and took care of unwanted kids. The result was I was left here. Mrs. Green received a generous check, and the heavily-veiled lady departed to unknown regions.

Once a month Mrs. Green received a check for my expenses, but nothing else. The veiled lady never showed up again; no letters ever came; we'd no idea who she was, nor where she lived. The checks came from all over the world. She had given me no name, and seemed to have one object—to dispose of me. I learned to lisp 'Mimi—evidently trying to say 'mamma'—and in that way I got a name. The neighborhood called me 'Mimi Green'. I grew up under that title. I guess they all thought I was Ma Green's child, for she dressed me better than the other kids who boarded with her, and I stayed on and on while they moved away. I'll say this much for my lady mother: she wasn't stingy about money. We always had one glorious spree when her checks arrived. Ma Green would get drunk for a week, while I reveled in lolly-pops and ice-cream sodas and the movies until I made myself sick. I helped Ma Green with the other kids who would come and go, and really didn't have such a bad time of it. When I was about fifteen I got the idea I wanted to go on the stage. It wasn't a hard job to get in the chorus, for I wasn't a bad looker, and could dance like sin. It was about a year later, when I'd begun to talk a little more like a human being and less like a Bowery tough, I met Sheila Del Monte."

"Oh, then you did know her?" said Tom with keen interest

"Sure, I knew her, and mighty well, believe me. Oh, I'll confess I was the 'Mimi' who sent her the threatening note and the flowers, and the knife—now that Cassandra has blabbed about it—but I didn't kill her. God love you; no! But I'm going to hand you the shock of your young life. You see, Sheila Del Monte and the veiled lady were one and the same person," she giggled childishly.

"Great God! You mean——"

"That she was my mother. Yes."

"But how did you find it out?" Tom could not conceal the astonishment he felt, and she evidently enjoyed the sensation she caused, even under the stress under which she was laboring.

"Whether she was stricken with conscience, had a little motherly solicitude, or just plain curiosity, I don't know; but one day, when I was sixteen, she showed up at Ma Green's; veiled, of course, but dressed like a million dollars. She told Ma Green she was my mother, and wanted to see me. Well, the old lady read her the riot act; said she didn't deserve the name of 'mother'; that it was no thanks to her I hadn't grown up a crook or worse, and what was she coming here veiled for, anyway? I was in the next room and heard the whole confab, but I laid low, so as to let the lady show her hand. But believe me, I was just busting with curiosity.

"Ma Green's tirade didn't feaze her a bit. She was just as languid and tranquil as you please, and when the old lady had finished, she informed her that she had paid her all these years to take care of me, not to give her lectures on motherhood. So ma asked me to come in. Lady mother didn't lift her veil, but I could see her start when she looked at me. If I do say it myself, I was a good-looking kid, and had a lot of class in wearing my clothes that you didn't find in the Ghetto. I could tell she was surprised. She'd evidently expected a little street Arab, dirty and uncouth. The year in the chorus had given me a kind of manner, too, and, believe me, I gave her back as good as she sent. I took a 'dear me, heaven forbid' attitude that equalled her own, and Greenland's icy mountains had nothing on my frozen face.

"I guess I must look like my father, and the resemblance startled her, for all of a sudden she flopped over, limp as a rag, in a dead faint. Well, zooie! up went that veil, and we brought her to with water and ammonia. You've worked with Del Monte and know what she looks like, but let me tell you, ten years ago she was the most beautiful thing I'd ever laid my eyes on. Why, when she lay there, all pale, her great eyes shut, my heart just went out to her. I was ready to fall down on my knees and worship her, even if she had deserted me when I was a baby. Why, there wasn't anything I wouldn't have done for her, I was so proud and happy over her being my mother!" Her voice choked and her eyes clouded with tears. "Say, that feeling didn't last long. When she came to and saw we'd seen her face, she flew into such a temper Ma Green's hair rose on end. Of course, even then I didn't know who she was, and she wouldn't tell me.

When she quieted down she apologized for getting angry, and said she'd come again; but she didn't.

"Then one day, just by accident, I went to the opera. Good Lord! I got weak and faint when Del Monte came on the stage and I recognized her. Here was my mother, a world-famous opera star, and me a poor little dub dancing in a chorus. Did I lose any time in hunting her up? Believe me, I did not. I chased around to that stage entrance and demanded to see Madame Del Monte. I saw Cassandra, that black maid, instead, and, of course, she gave me a long rigmarole about her mistress not being able to see strangers at the theater, etc. I just pulled out a card I had printed, with 'Mimi Green' on it, and wrote 'Del Monte' after the 'Green', and said: 'You take that note in to your mistress; I think she'll see me.' Cassandra looked scared of her life, and she was going to refuse, but when she saw what I'd written she turned pea-green and chased herself across that stage in a jiffy. You bet lady mother saw me. She was afraid I'd tell some one around the theater who I was, and she was anxious to find out how much I'd spilled, but she wasn't any gladder to see me than she would had I been a rattlesnake. I know it now, but I was such a poor simp that when she smiled and held out her hand to me, I just fell all over myself and kissed her, and told her I loved her, and a whole lot of other rot.

"Well, she took me home with her for tea. Say, can you imagine me going to her house after living all my life at Ma Green's? I couldn't hide my astonishment, and I didn't try very hard. I just sat like any boob and stared at the place and the queer servants she had. Kaldah, that big black Oriental was there then—is he now?—and Cassandra, and a dummy cook. I guess Del Monte enjoyed my surprise, for she kept laughing at me and was as sweet as sugar to me. She asked me all about myself—if I was ambitious, could I sing, and a lot of questions that kept me busy for an hour. Then after I'd told her everything I knew about myself, from bath-tub to chorus, she sat and studied as though I wasn't there, finally telling me to go home and come again the next day, but under penalty of never seeing her again not to tell any one of our relationship."

She paused abruptly, coughed, and after lighting a cigarette continued, without waiting for any comment from Tom: "I hot-footed it to Ma Green's on air. I don't know whether I rode or walked, but, glory be, I was excited. Guess Ma Green got jealous, for I talked so much about Del Monte she began to cry and said I'd desert her for a woman who didn't love me, and I didn't appreciate her, and a bunch of other sad stuff. But I convinced her I loved her, though I knew Del Monte could have me any day. Well, when I got there the next day, after dreaming all night about her queer place, she came out flat and asked me how I'd like to live with her. I didn't need to tell her; she knew. I couldn't get moved quick enough, I said. Then she almost floored me with her proposition."

"I think I know what it was," said Tom quietly.

"How d'ye mean?" Angela's eyes narrowed. "She never told you herself?"

"No; but I'm under the impression that the proposition she made you is similar to the one she made my sweetheart."

"Another! Hm, there's a lot of fall guys in the world. I might a-known she'd go on with it. Well, anyway, she told me right flat there wasn't any love to it—that she wasn't taking me because of any maternal feeling or sense of duty towards me. She thought I'd be useful to her. She liked my looks and I was ambitious. Any other girl would do as well, providing she had my characteristics. Gee, she was frank; but I fell for it, thinking I'd just make her love me, for then I was strong for her. She didn't want me running around loose, bragging she was my mother, either. Did she promise to make a singer of your girl, and hand her that bunk about her soul living in the girl's body?"

"Yes."

"And she fell for it! I didn't swallow that at first, but I let her think I did. I wanted to be with her. You see, I was crazy about all that luxury, and her, too, and ambitious as sin. I didn't like the idea of passing up Ma Green, though, for she was a good old soul and after all had been the only mother I'd ever known; but Del Monte said I'd have to cut every one I'd ever known, and just live for her. Like the ungrateful little baggage I was, I did it, too. She sent that wall-eyed Kaldah after my things, with a note to Ma Green from me, telling her what I'd done. I shed tears a-plenty thinking of the poor old woman, but you see, after all, I was only a kid, and had been starved for pretty things all my life, so I tried not to let thoughts of her spoil my happiness. Del Monte herself did that. You knew her pretty well, didn't you?" she inquired suddenly.

"Rather," replied Tom; "we worked together."

"She was a devil!" cried the girl, her pale little face flaming; "a devil in a beautiful body. You had to live with her to find it out. At first I thought her insane furies were just temperament. I had an idea all artists had to be temperamental. But it was just the pure, cussed wickedness coming out of her. She hadn't a bit of heart, nor kindness, nor humanness about her. She just worshipped herself, and had gone clean crazy thinking about her voice and her body. She had her servants scared stiff—hypnotized 'em, I think—into believing anything, and in a little while she had me the same way. In a month I'd have given my right arm to get away and never see her again."

"But you did get away?" said Tom.

"Yet, I got away. For a while she had me believing she had supernatural powers, and could transmit her soul to me, and all that bunk, and I cowered around like Kaldah and Cassandra did. Then one day I woke up to the fact that she was just stark crazy on the subject of self, and she was just a human being, a little stronger willed than the rest of us; so instead of being meek as Moses, along with the rest, I gave her as good as she sent. That was the first time she whipped me."

"Whipped you?" There was horror in Tom's voice.

"Yes; with a blacksnake-whip that she'd used on Kaldah and Cassandra."

"Great Scott! And they stood for it?"

"Yes; Cassandra did. She was just cowed and scared of her life, but I think Del Monte had something on Kaldah. I saw him once after she'd had one of her insane passions, and had taken it out on him. His face was livid and his eyes wide and yellow like a cat's. He gave me the creeps to look at him. But I knew then he hated as much as he feared her. Well, as I said, she whipped me, and almost broke my spirit, but not quite. The next time I defied her I swore I'd get get away, and that I'd get even with her if it took the rest of my life. Well, she kept me there for two years, virtually a prisoner, and when Kaldah or Cassandra weren't handy she vented her insane fury on me. How she hated me! I was her child, the being she had brought into the world, and the only person who didn't cower before her and do as she said. I wasn't afraid of her, not a bit; even when she lashed me she couldn't make me fear her. I'd laugh at her until

she grew yellow with rage. But the life was getting me. I tried to kill myself.

"Good heavens!" Tom sprang to his feet.

"Kaldah found me lying in a pool of blood just outside his door. When Del Monte saw me she gave a shriek and keeled over. Cassandra called up an ambulance while she was still in a faint, and they sent me away to a hospital. They thought I was dying, I guess, and that it was best to get me out of the house, even risking Del Monte's fury to do it. Anyway, when Del Monte came to they told her I was dead, and she didn't ask to see me.

"At the hospital they pulled me through, and later I wrote a note to Del Monte, signing to it a nurse's name, saying that Mimi Green had died by suicide. When I knew anything I told them my name was Angela Callendar—the first name that popped into my head, so Del Monte couldn't trace me if she wanted to. Of course, I had a trial for attempted suicide, and I hadn't any money, but nothing worried me so long as I was away from her. Evidently she never questioned but that I was dead, nor the servants either, for she never looked me up, nor came to Ma Green to see if I'd gone there. When I got well enough to leave the hospital and was discharged from court, I hunted up Ma Green, told her all I'd gone through, borrowed some money from her till I got my old job back on the stage. Then little by little Angela Callendar worked herself up until she made a name for herself as a dancer. That's my strange, true history," she added with a whimsical smile which was almost roguish.

"Well, I'll grant it's strange enough," said Tom, "but you've not told me when you came down here again and why you sent for Cassandra."

Her eyes narrowed as she knocked the ashes off the end of her cigarette. "That's another story entirely, old dear," she said.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WHILE Tom was having his conversation with Angela Callendar, Grace was tossing about restlessly on a sleepless bed, and farther uptown Inspector Donovan was sitting in his den, puffing on an old, beloved cob pipe while he ruminated over the events of the day.

He was not surprised when his telephone-bell rang, although it was past three o'clock. On taking down the receiver, he recognized his operator, Larry Olden's voice.

"Hello; what's doing?" he asked, removing his pipe.

"Say, chief," said the young man, "about ten minutes ago the door-bell here rang, but before I could get downstairs, whoever it was was gone, and that young chap Steel, that was sweet on the girl, is gone, too."

"See which way he went?" asked Donovan with interest.

"No; I had to get into my clothes," replied the other, "and there wasn't a sign of any one about when I got downstairs and looked outside."

"Hm! Maybe he went out for a cigar, or to take a walk because he couldn't sleep. Hang around the front of the house, and see if he doesn't come back," said Donovan. After he had ceased speaking he sat for a little while smoking, then suddenly he rose abruptly, flung aside the dressing-gown he wore, donned his street clothes and calling a taxi, drove downtown.

He came face to face with Tom in front of Del Monte's house, and although Steel was surprised to see him, he was greatly relieved. He used the key he had obtained from Kaldah to admit them, and when once inside the house, informed the inspector of all that he had learned from Angela, giving him the telegram he had intercepted.

"You'd make a detective, Steel," said Donovan dryly. "Couldn't have done better myself. But I suppose you left the young lady alone to make another get-away," he added sarcastically.

Tom grinned. "Much you know about it," he chuckled. "I took no chances. I locked her up, and as the windows are grated, there's no way for her to escape. She's some mad little lady."

"Great boy!" laughed Donovan. "She knows more than she wants us to learn, that's a certainty. Larry, you beat it downtown to this number and fetch the girl back, while I see what effect this telegram has on the black bird upstairs."

Cassandra, awaking out of a deep, albeit restless sleep, was inclined to be irritable, until she saw who it was that had awakened her. Silently she swaddled her ample form in a gay, many-colored kimono, and taking the telegram from Donovan, puzzled over it. She strained every effort to appear composed, but her brown face became a sickly yellow and the hand that held the slip of paper shook visibly.

"Mimi, eh?" said the inspector. "Thought you said she was dead."

"She is," muttered the black woman; "she sho' is!"

"Dead women don't send telegrams," exclaimed Donovan angrily, "and you know you lied when you said you went to her funeral—when you said you watched her die."

"Yes, sir, I lied," she said helplessly, 'but she's dead, and she died in the hospital. Lordy, lordy, lordy!" She began to sway, moaning in an uncanny manner.

When Larry arrived three-quarters of an hour later with Angela Callendar, Cassandra gave a cry at the sight of her, and dropped on her knees, hiding her face in the cushions of the divan, and shaking as though with a heavy chill. The girl herself wore a sullen look and she glared at Tom, who grinned back at her.

"Nice time of night to drag me out," she said by way of greeting the inspector. "You're not half as polite as I thought you were."

"There's a few little points in that story of yours which you related to my friend Steel that I want cleaned up," he replied. "You see, yesterday you denied knowing Del Monte to me."

"So you spilled the whole thing," she cried, turning on Tom. "I thought you were a friend of mine."

"I am, Angela, but this is law, and in this case truth is the best thing."

"Oh, well," she sighed, "I should worry. Shoot; I'll answer any questions you ask."

Cassandra suddenly ceased sobbing, and sitting back on the floor, stared up at the girl, her black face tear-stained and convulsive.

"Why did you run away after I'd been to your place?" asked Donovan, motioning her to be seated.

She hesitated, looked at Cassandra, then snapped her fingers with sudden resolve. "You told me Del Monte had been murdered. I was afraid you might connect me with the crime."

"Why?"

"Because I'd sent her the dagger and several threatening letters, not because I intended doing anything, but just to frighten her. She thought I was dead. So did that black witch there."

"Not dead—not dead!" murmured Cassandra. "Not a ha'nt at all!"

"Why did you telegraph Cassandra," continued the inspector.

"Because I knew she killed her mistress, and I felt, in a measure, I was to blame, and I wanted to find out how much she had implicated me."

Cassandra gave a low wail of terror, and once more hid her head in the cushions.

"Because you knew she'd killed——" the inspector looked at the defiant girl in amazement.

"Yes. Oh, she didn't tell me; but look at her. You don't need further proof that she did it, do you? I told you she thought I was dead. She did. So one day, when she came face to face with me on Broadway, she almost caused a riot by her actions, thinking I was a ghost, you see. I made her come along with me, and she did, though she was afraid of her life. I asked her about Del Monte, and I could see how she hated her. I had a lot of things there I wanted, you see; all I owned was left behind when I was taken away, so I bribed Cassandra to get them for me—pictures, jewels, etc. I was pretty sure they were still there. Cassandra was afraid of Del Monte, but she was more afraid of ha'nts, and I was a ha'nt. Knowing she couldn't get into Del Monte's things and not wanting her to know I was alive, I bought some chloroform at a drug-store for Cassandra to use, to put her to sleep while she went rummaging for my possessions. I shouldn't have done it, I guess, but I did, and Cassandra went away promising to get the things and send them to me at Ma Green's. As a parting shot I said to her: 'What d'ye live with her for? If it was me I'd kill her first!' My Gawd, captain, you don't know the knockout you handed me when you said Del Monte had been murdered. Right away I felt I'd put the notion in this poor thing's head, and I knew she'd done it. That's why I sent the telegram to her."

"Come on," said Donovan, shaking the black woman, "tell us the truth now, and we'll make things easier for you."

"She's ignorant and superstitious," said Tom compassionately, "she thought a ha'nt had ordered her to do it."

Cassandra turned grateful eyes to him. "Yes, sir," she muttered, "I thought she was a ha'nt, and I wanted to get away. I was afraid here, and I knowed she'd kill me some day—she almost has, three times. I can show you the marks. I used the chloroform as Mimi told me to, but when I saw madame sleepin' all sound there, and that there other little girl eatin' her heart out and wastin' away, I got wild clean through. I just kept a-sayin' to myself: 'You devil! You devil! You devil!' I forgot all about Mimi's things. I didn't know exactly what I was doin'. The first thing I knowed was that I saw madame's paper-knife, which had been laying on the table by her, was sticking in her heart, and her night-gown was all bloody. I knowed I'd done it, but I was calmlike, and didn't care. Little missy was saved, and me and Kaldah could go away and get married, and nobody would do anything to me for killing a devil, 'specially when ha'nts had told me to. I just pulled the knife out and dropped it on the floor by the bed; then I went out and locked the door."

"Quick work," said Donovan to Tom.

"What are you going to do with her?" asked the latter. Her devotion to Grace had impressed him.

"Put her under arrest; but I think she's got a good chance for freedom when everything is brought to light."

Cassandra's sentence was light. She became a servant in the house of Tom and Grace after they were married. Tom, who decided he might become a better detective than a singer, is now assisting Donovan, who, for the past few months, had shown a decided preference for lighter amusement, and especially the dancing of one Angela Callendar.

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The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

NO.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robert C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, by Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, by Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by R. Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler

NO.
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29 THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30 THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW, by L. Jerome
31 LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, by Beulah Poynter
32 THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS, by Inspector John Harrigan
33 TRACKED TO CHINA, by Chief Roger O'Brien
34 AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES, by May Halsey Miller
35 THE CLUE IN THE BOX, by Alexander Douglas
36 TRAILED BY A FRENCH DETECTIVE, by Rene Renaud
37 A DROP OF INK, by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden
38 THE TEN DOCTORS, by Allan Arnold Fox
39 THE STAIN ON PAGE 61, by Chas. T. Jordan
40 A MASKED MYSTERY, by Police Sergeant Kelly.

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THE CASE OF HARGRAVE

By FRANK E. MORTON

JAMES HARGRAVE and I were lads at school together, and fast friends. He was very intelligent—full, brimful of spirit—and far superior to me as a scholar. When I left school to commence my novitiate in Mulbery street, our severance was for many years complete. We occasionally passed each other in the streets; but the recognition, when it took place, was, on both sides, cold and distant. The family had received a considerable lift in life, which enabled his parents, although they had seven or eight other children, to complete his education in the New York University. That accomplished—very successfully, as I saw by a newspaper report—Hargrave settled at Lincoln's Inn, was in due time called to the bar, and, knowing, as I did, his mounting ambition, I was sure he had from that moment the great seal in his imaginary clutch. It was almost the duty of such a man to tacitly disclaim any personal acquaintance with a mere police-officer. He obtained, however, so far as I could judge by the law reports, very few briefs during five or six years; and when engaged, his part was a very subordinate, trifling one. Gall, wormwood, hell-fire that, I was quite sure, to James Hargrave; in whom, assuming the boy to be father of the man, the quality of patience would be strikingly deficient.

The melodramatic mind of New York, and, I have no doubt, of the country generally, was strongly excited by the death, with its attendant circumstances, of Caroline Denby, who was found drowned in the Wallabout canal. I mean by the "melodramatic mind," that which revels in —gloats over—details of mystery and crime. Caroline Denby had been nurse-maid in the family of George Watson, a gentleman of fortune, residing on Fifth avenue, and having the reputation of being a great admirer of youthful beauty. Caroline Denby, whom I myself had observed with interest, was a remarkable pretty, interesting girl; her age when she perished eighteen only. The body was discovered, soon after dawn, by a passer-by. Police officers were soon upon the spot, who at once declared that the girl had been murdered. By the marks around her throat, there seemed no doubt that she had been strangled and afterwards flung by the assassin into the canal. In one of her pockets was found a note in a man's hand signed "George," appointing to meet her at nine o'clock the previous evening, not far from where the corpse was found. An inquest was held on the body, and a verdict returned of willful murder against some person or persons unknown. A reward of five hundred dollars was offered by the Government for the discovery of the unknown person or persons, and the affair was placed in my hands.

I had not heard the evidence given before the coroner, but I had read it as reported in the newspapers. The impression which it made upon me and the public generally was that Caroline Denby had been murdered by her master, George Watson, although sufficient legal proof of his guilt might not have been adduced. He had been seen to joke with the girl when he thought himself unobserved; and when Mrs. Watson, whose suspicions would seem to have been aroused, insisted, with tears and in the hearing of servants, that "the hussy" should be immediately discharged, her husband angrily refused compliance. The name at the foot of the note found in the girl's pocket was his own—"George"—and though the writing did not appear to be his, that might have been easily managed. Moreover, it was shown that the girl, refused leave to go out on the evening in question, had appealed to her master, by whom it was instantly given. To be sure, it was proved that Mr. Watson had gone early to the Broadway Theatre, and had been seen and spoken with there by several persons—two of whom expressed their belief, almost positive conviction, that he remained in the house till the end of the second act, at about ten o'clock—and the assignation made in the note was for nine. But the hour might have been changed by verbal agreement, and it was remembered that Caroline Denby had asked leave to remain out till eleven. Then Mr. Watson had gone to the gallery—a most unusual circumstance—and he might easily have slipped out of a theater so crowded on that night, without his departure or absence being noticed by the two friendly witnesses.

Another suspicious item was, that, having agreed to preside that very evening at an anniversary dinner, in aid of charity, in The Bronx, he sent a note, excusing himself on the plea of indisposition, a few hours before he should have taken the chair. All this, combined with an injudicious suggestion, offered by a lawyer who watched the case on his behalf, that Caroline Denby might have committed suicide, having first vainly attempted to do so by strangling herself, which would account for the marks about her neck, before throwing herself into the water—a suggestion which greatly irritated the jury, whose minds were full of commiseration for the unhappy victim—nearly brought down upon him a verdict of willful murder. The coroner, calmer, more skilled in estimating the real value of evidence, dissuaded them from adopting that course, and the verdict as already given was recorded. With that verdict the authorities were so dissatisfied that at the same time instructions were given me to thoroughly investigate the case, officers were directed to watch the house in Fifth avenue day and night; and should Watson leave it, never for one moment to lose sight of him. In the event of his attempting to leave the country, they were ordered to arrest him forthwith.

The evidence, of which I have given a summary, did not, when more critically weighed, appear to press so heavily against Mr. Watson. As to having been seen fooling with Caroline Denby, there were few pretty girls with whom, if he had a chance, he did not attempt to amuse himself; and I saw, by the copy of the depositions, it was sworn that Miss Denby repulsed his advances with indignation. And would a man, contemplating the murder of a girl, subscribe his real Christian name to a note appointing the place, naming the hour, where and when the foul deed was to be perpetrated? And if the murder had been committed during a sudden access of passion, would not the assassin have searched the pocket of his victim, to assure himself that no such damning evidence of his guilt as that note should be found upon the body?

It was true that that favoring inference would not bear much straining—proving, as it seemed, too much—that

the man named, whoever he was who wrote the note, made the assignation, was not the murderer. Again, why should Watson seek to compass the death of the girl? The very fact, too, that he had openly given her permission to leave the house and stop out till eleven on the evening when she met her death told rather for than against him. It was a fine moonlight evening, too. Strange, then, an intentional murderer—having no overwhelming inducement to commit such a crime—should take pains, one might almost say, to insure detection!

The one circumstance which continued to weigh in my mind against him, was that deemed most favorable to him—that he had been seen, spoken with, in the gallery of the Broadway Theater, by several persons, two of whom were almost certain he remained in the house till ten o'clock. Why did he go there—declining, under a false pretense, an important engagement, that he might do so—except on purpose to be seen by those who could prove the fact?

Finding myself in this state of dubiety, it occurred to me that I might as well call upon Mr. Watson; frankly admit that I was the detective officer commissioned to investigate the unfortunate affair, and invite him to acquaint me with any circumstance that had fallen within his own knowledge, that might help to the solution of the mystery. I scarcely need remark that I should first remind him that any statement he should volunteer might be used against him, while it could only be evidence in his favor indirectly; that is, by fixing suspicion upon, and, as I hoped, leading to the discovery of the real culprit. Before, however, hazarding such an unusual step, I consulted the chief at headquarters, who, with some hesitation, agreed that it might be well for me to call upon Watson.

I was very well received. He was a gentlemanly person, and I had no doubt, under any ordinary circumstances, a gay, convivial, entertaining companion. For the moment he was "a grave man," oppressed, beaten down by the terrible anathemas hurled at him by public opinion.

He expressed gratitude for my visit, and would freely tell me all he knew or suspected that had any possible reference to the death of Caroline Denby.

"I admit at once," he said, "that I liked Caroline Denby. I made overtures to her, all of which were repulsed. Almost the last time I spoke with her, she indignantly exclaimed: 'Ah! I shall be as good as Mrs. Watson before long!' I laughed——"

"One moment, Mr. Watson. This may be important. As I understand, you were making what you call overtures to the girl, when she, repulsing these overtures with indignation, said: 'I shall be as good as Mrs. Watson before long.' Is that so?"

"Yes; Caroline Denby made use of those words to that effect."

"Go on, sir, if you please."

"Mrs. Watson, as you are aware, refused to allow Caroline to go out on the fatal evening. I gave her permission. I had more than one motive for doing so. In the first place, I was jealous!"

"Jealous! I don't understand."

"Yes, jealous! It is somewhat humiliating to confess so much, in reference to a nursery-girl, however attractive. I asked her where she was going; the reply was, to meet a friend, who would take her to the Broadway Theater. 'Your young man?' said I, perhaps with some bitterness. 'My young man,' she pertly replied, with a bridling smile, 'is a gentleman!' I was determined to see who the young 'gentleman' was, gave her leave to go, wrote to the secretary of the Charitable Institution, excusing myself from taking the chair at the dinner, and proceeded to the show. I concluded that Caroline and her 'young gentleman' would be in the gallery. I was disappointed. She was not there; and I did not remain till the end of the second act—though I have no doubt the witnesses who deposed to that effect believe I did."

Mr. Watson paused, his countenance expressing a doubt as to whether he ought to go on.

"I left the theater in an ill-humor. To be baffled in the pursuit of any object which, if gained, would be flung, after a moment's possession, in all probability, carelessly aside, is, I need not tell you, to invest that object with a thousand-fold more attractions. I almost began to fancy myself seriously in love with Caroline Denby. Absurdity, of course! Still, that influence was upon me at the time; and remembering to have once seen the girl strolling near Wallabout Canal in Brooklyn, with a young fellow, the notion entered my head of seeking her there. And there I saw her. It was a splendid night. Caroline and the young gentleman were walking side by side, but apart. He wore a military cap and uniform. I might have approached nearer, but that I saw Mr. Westbrook's (my neighbor) automobile approaching. Not wishing to be seen there—why I can scarcely tell—I turned away, hailed a taxi, and presently found myself in Jersey. I did not return home till the next day."

"The person you saw with Caroline wore, you say, a military rig, but you did not see his face. Was he tall or short, stout or slender?"

"About the middling height—neither slender nor stout."

"And they were walking apart, as if they were or had been quarreling?"

"Yes, that was my impression, or perhaps I have only thought so since I heard of the catastrophe."

"I can understand that. You have nothing to add—no important circumstance?"

"None that I can at present call to mind."

"Of course you understand, Mr. Watson, that if at any future time, or any person representing you, should attempt to prove that you were at the Broadway Theater till ten o'clock, I should be under the necessity of stating that by your own voluntary avowal you left much earlier than that?"

"True, Mr. Clarke; but I believe you cannot give a part of the voluntary statement I have made in evidence against me. It must be admitted in its entirety, quantum valeat, or not at all."

"Humph! I regret to find, Mr. Watson, you are so well acquainted with the practice of our criminal courts. It deprives your statement of much of its value in my eyes. Good-day, sir; I leave you for the present."

He started, and his face perceptibly paled. I had emphasized, both by tone and look, the last three words; feeling sure that, though he might have told me the truth, it was not all the truth.

"Stop one moment," he exclaimed, as I was leaving the room; "stop one moment. Let me try and remember. No," he added, after a minute or so's consideration, "no, I can recollect nothing else."

At my lodgings, a man who gave the name of Alexander King was waiting upon me. He had called to say what he knew about the matter. First, as to himself. He was a chauffeur, out of a job, and had formerly lived with Mr. Watson, a very kind master, but who had refused to give him a recommendation for sobriety. As that would be sure to come out, King thought it best to say so at once. The man added "that he had waited to see if a reward would be offered before saying anything."

"Very well. And now what have you to say?"

"This: that I saw Mr. Watson at about nine o'clock in the evening when Caroline Denby was murdered, talking with her, not one hundred yards from where the body was found."

"You did? Are you sure? Did he see you?"

"I am sure, as I saw his face as plainly as I see yours. He did not see me. I was curious to find out what was going on, and took care he should not. I was not quite near enough to hear what they were talking about; but I heard Mr. Watson, who seemed to be in a great passion, call her 'a ridiculous fool.' Just then Mr. Westbrook's car came in sight, and Mr. Watson bolted. I followed, wishing to keep him in view, and thinking that he would perhaps return. I wanted to get hold of him, you see, so as to make him give me a recommendation. I like to speak out plain. He got into a taxi. I chased it, but hang me if he mustn't have slipped out; for when we stopped at Montgomery street, Jersey City, he was gone. I cut back again; but neither Mr. Watson nor Caroline Denby was there to be seen. This is what I have to say, which shows Mr. Watson couldn't have been at the play-house, as his friend swore he was."

"I knew that before. Still your evidence is very important. You must go with me at once before a magistrate. Don't frighten yourself. It is my duty, believing you have spoken the truth, to obtain a warrant for the arrest of Watson."

That was soon done, and within two hours after leaving him, I was again with the alleged culprit, accompanied this time by another officer. I curtly told our errand, adding: "You foolishly attempted to deceive me, by suppressing the fact that you spoke with Caroline Denby after leaving the theater for the purpose of seeing her. The fact that you did so has since been ascertained beyond a doubt."

The next day George Watson was formally charged in a police-court with the willful murder of Caroline Denby, and then, sufficient evidence having been given, the prisoner was remanded. Among the crowded auditory I noticed James Hargrave, the lawyer. Neither the prisoner nor the murdered girl, so far as I know, were known to him; but had Caroline Denby been his sister, the accused his brother, he could not have been more painfully excited. His flaming glance now rested upon me, now upon the prisoner, and the next moment upon the magistrate—upon whoever was speaking or giving evidence. Strange—passing strange! To be sure, he was always of a very excitable temperament; but there was a fire in those dark eyes which only volcanic passion could have kindled. Had he seen and loved the nursery-servant? Was he the—the real——? My mind refused to shape the dimly horrible suspicion which glanced across it.

Immediately the magistrate ordered the prisoner to be remanded, Hargrave pressed forward, and whispered eagerly to the lawyer who appeared for Mr. Watson.

"Your honor will accept bail, I trust," said the lawyer, evidently in compliance with Hargrave's suggestions. "It can be given to any amount."

"I dare say it could. But no bail can, as you know, be accepted in such a case, not even by a judge, at this stage of the inquiry. I am surprised at such a question from a professional gentleman of your experience."

It was surprising, and still more so that a lawyer should have suggested it.

"Mr. Clarke," said Hargrave, accosting me and proffering his hand, as we left the court; "Mr. Clarke, it is a long time since we had a chat. Shall you be at home this evening? I wish to speak with you, in confidence. You have, I see, the management of this unfortunate case."

"I am instructed, Mr. Hargrave, to make strict inquiry into all circumstances having the remotest relation to the death of Caroline Denby; and I will remain at home for the express purpose of hearing what you have to say upon the subject. It is of that, I am quite sure, you wish to speak."

"True, quite true! In confidence, as between old friends."

"I do not invite this confidence, Mr. Hargrave; but I will accept it in my character of police-officer. I frankly add that you are now an object of suspicion with me, in connection with this melancholy, mysterious affair."

"That suspicion will soon be removed. The 'confidence' I spoke of does not relate to any wish that you should keep any self-criminating secrets of mine. Not at all. However, I will see you at about eight o'clock this evening, and explain. Good-by till then."

Hargrave was really drunk when he called upon me—not with wine or other intoxicating liquor, though he had perhaps drank freely; but with nervous excitement—passion! His mind was on fire; but what particular demon's flaming glance—whether the Demon of Hate, Revenge, or Jealousy, or an incarnation of all three—glared in those burning eyes, I was not sufficiently skilled to decide. I should presently know.

He burst forth at once: "Watson is innocent of the murder he is accused of—innocent as you and I. I swear it; and yet he will be electrocuted—killed like a dog, unless the truth be made known. And I—I alone—can put you on the track of the real murderer—the cowardly assassin—and—oh, God! that it should be so—my most intimate friend! Clarke"—he went on, with gathering, culminating rage—"Clarke, I loved that unfortunate girl; loved her with such passion that, in a moment of delirium, I offered to marry her. The offer was rejected. She was engaged; would soon be the wife of a man whom I knew well. The name of the successful wooer she would not disclose. A promise had been exacted from her that she should for a time keep that secret. I left her in a fury. Love—rejected love especially—is lynx-eyed, and it was not long before I discovered who it was that had deprived me of the prize. It was no other than the man to whom I had virtually introduced the unfortunate girl, by pointing her out to him one Sunday evening in Central Park—Lieutenant George Halford, of the —— regiment, now quartered at Camp Upton."

"Lieutenant George Halford!"

"Lieutenant George Halford. He is often in New York—very often. He has influential friends, you know; d—n him!"

"You must furnish me with some proof, Mr. Hargrave, before I can act upon this terrible accusation."

"Furnish yourself with the proofs. Read this note. You will then know how to act."

"My Dear Hargrave—Lose not a moment in forwarding to me the valise which, in the hurry of leaving town on Thursday morning last, I forgot to call for at your office. It contains papers of momentous consequence to me just now. I would run up to town myself, but that I am very, very ill. Yours faithfully,

"George Halford."

"This note does not enlighten me, Mr. Hargrave. If you have nothing else——"

"Tut!" he broke in impatiently. "Tut! I have taken the liberty to open the valise, examine the papers of such momentous consequence to him just now. There are several notes addressed to Halford by Caroline Denby, one, the last dated, imploring him to see her without delay, in reply to which he wrote that letter found upon his victim. He is naturally apprehensive that suspicion may fall upon him. No wonder he is ill—very ill—he having been seen many times with the unfortunate girl; and should that be the case, what more natural than that the police should make inquiries at the office of his friend Hargrave, where, it is known, he was generally to be found when in town? Should the police do so, one of the first articles they would see is the valise, with the name of Lieutenant George Halford painted thereon. In one of the girl's

notes," continued Hargrave, "is an allusion to myself. She feared I was in the habit of watching them, and bids her lover 'and future husband beware of that Mr. Hargrave.' 'There is danger in him,' she adds. That note read by the police—by you—it will be your imperative duty to insist upon my appearance before the magistrate, —where I shall be required to state upon oath all I know relative to the murder. That will mainly be, that I saw Halford and Caroline Denby together on the evening of the murder, and heard high words pass between them."

"How was Halford dressed?"

"He wore a military rig."

"That tallies with a statement made by Mr. Watson. Did you see him at or near the place?"

"I did not. Nor did I myself remain long. I was not desirous that Halford should see me, and I left him and Caroline Denby together."

"So far it is but a case of suspicion against Halford. No jury would convict upon it. What sufficient motive could he have had for murdering the girl?"

"A supreme motive!" replied Hargrave, the fire of passion, which had cooled somewhat, blazing fiercely forth again. "Ask the wealthy widow of John Bishop of Brooklyn if he had not! He was to have married her daughter, Eily, a few weeks hence—one of the loveliest maidens in that city, and who will have a dowry of fifty thousand dollars at least. There is no question that he promised Caroline Denby to make her his wife—so madly infatuated, like myself, was he with her; and I have no doubt, from a passage in one of the letters, that she had heard of the contemplated marriage, and threatened to write to Bishop's widow."

"Such a threat would certainly have been motive sufficient. By the bye, I have seen you, Mr. Hargrave, more than once with the ladies in Bishop's automobile.

"Very likely," said Hargrave, turning away. "I have the honor of a slight acquaintance with the family. At what hour shall you call at my chambers to-morrow morning?"

"I shall go there at once, taking another officer with me. Delays are not permissible in cases of homicide. Lieutenant Halford might send some one for the valise. Having secured that, we shall, should the letters justify such a step, be off at once to Camp Upton."

"To arrest Halford?"

"Unquestionably. I do not, as I said before, believe that a jury will convict upon such evidence; but it will amply justify his arrest and examination before a magistrate."

"I think with you," said Mr. Hargrave, "that a conviction, should no corroborative evidence be forthcoming, would be very—very doubtful."

"Not at all doubtful. He would be acquitted to a certainty. You, as a lawyer, must know that. But the arrest, the strong suspicion of his guilt, the exposure of his attentions to Caroline Denby," I added, looking hard at Hargrave, "will as certainly prevent his marriage with Mrs. Bishop's heiress!"

"Yes, to be sure—to be sure," said Hargrave, with suddenly heightened color. "I did not think of that!"

"Didn't you?" thought I; "then I am strangely mistaken; that's all."

Lieutenant George Halford was taken in his bed the same night, and brought immediately to New York. He expressed no surprise; but warmly protested his innocence. The note found in the girl's pocket he admitted to be his, and that he had met her at the hour appointed. High words passed between them, and they parted in anger. I asked if it was true that he was soon to have married the late John Bishop's daughter.

"It is true," he replied, with strong emotion; "but that dream is over, however the charge I am in custody for may be disposed of."

As the prisoner admitted all the facts before the magistrate on the following day which Mr. Hargrave could have proved, that gentleman, to his great relief, was not called upon to give evidence. The magistrate, though with considerable hesitation, finally committed Halford for trial. Mr. Watson was liberated, and left the court without a stain upon his character, so far as the murder of Caroline Denby was concerned. I confess that I felt great doubt of the soundness of the worthy magistrate's decision in both cases; neither could I help suspecting that James Hargrave knew more than he chose, or dared to say, concerning the girl's death.

The Grand Jury ignored the bill preferred against Lieutenant Halford, in deference to the recommendation of the Recorder, who in his charge said that, as the evidence disclosed by the depositions taken before the committing magistrate would not justify a conviction, it would be better to throw out the bill against the prisoner, who might in that case be tried thereafter for the murder, should more conclusive evidence of his guilt be discovered. Lieutenant Halford was consequently discharged out of custody, with a blasted character—a free but utterly ruined man.

Several times during the next five or six months I saw James Hargrave, always with Bishop's widow and daughter; and I more than once heard from parties likely to be well informed that he was the young lady's accepted suitor. My surprise was great, therefore, when I read in the papers a flaming account of her marriage with the eldest son of a millionaire banker. A fickle-minded lady, it seemed. Hargrave had missed a great prize, after all. Could he have foreseen that he should, would Halford have been charged with the murder of Caroline Denby? I thought not—decidedly not.

The next day, a hurriedly scrawled note from Hargrave was placed in my hands by his clerk. The writer wished to see me immediately.

"Mr. Hargrave is dying," said the pale, breathless man. "The doctor is with him; but nothing can be done to save, or even prolong his life. We must be quick if you would see him alive."

A sad spectacle awaited me at my old schoolfellow's home. Hargrave, extended upon a sofa, was dying by his own act. He had taken poison, and was sinking fast. He recognized me, and held out his shaken hand in token that he did. He then motioned for some whisky to be given to him. The spirit gave him sufficient strength to say:

"Hand me that paper on the table. This paper, Clarke," continued the wretched suicide, "is my dying confession, written by my own hand; and knowing myself to be dying, I declare it to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as respects the death of Caroline Denby. Read it aloud." I read it.

"I, James Hargrave, being of sound mind, make the following statement. It is the discharge of a debt of honor due to Lieutenant George Halford; I have at last finally decided to cast off the burden of a worthless, intolerable existence. George Halford is innocent of the death of Caroline Denby; that is to say, she perished by her own act, not by his; though it cannot be denied that he was indirectly the cause of her untimely end. She must have thrown herself into the Canal during an excess of despair. I was watching them, and distinctly heard him say that was the last time they would ever meet. He said something about a liberal allowance of money, which the poor, proud girl fiercely resented. He then went off, and I presented myself, endeavored to soothe her grief with kind, respectful words; for I loved the girl, and my heart

bled with pity for her. She refused to be comforted, and angrily bade me begone.

"I did go; and was about half way to my home when the terrible idea occurred to me—I repeat that I loved, deeply loved the unfortunate girl—when the terrible idea occurred to me that she might in her agony of sorrow destroy herself by drowning—the canal being, as one may say, so temptingly near. Instantly I turned back, having been perhaps half an hour away. When I reached the place, she was nowhere to be seen. The moon had gone down, but it was starlight, and peering along the dark surface of the canal, I at last descried part of a white dress caught in a projecting timber of the lock. With much difficulty I caught hold of it and ultimately succeeded in dragging the body out of the water. It was Caroline Denby's. She was quite dead, and the sight of the pale corpse, the staring eyes threw me into a frenzy. I knelt down by her, and embraced, kissed, hugged the dead girl; for a time I was mad, literally mad.

"At last, regaining self-possession, I saw discoloring marks about her neck. There was nothing of the kind when I drew her out of the water. I am sure of that. I, in that passionate delirium, must have inflicted them. It was an anonymous note from me, handed to the lawyer at the police-court during Watson's examination, which induced that gentleman to ask the surgeon who was giving evidence if he was sure those marks had been made before life was extinct. The learned medico had no doubt they had been made before life was extinct. A blockhead —fool! But to go on. The danger to myself, should I be found there, immediately rose up before me, and I hurried away. It was an after-thought of mine to endeavor to profit in a certain quarter by fastening suspicion upon Halford. Clarke, the detective, whom I intend sending for, always, I think, suspected me. If of the murder of Caroline Denby, he grossly wronged me.

"(Signed) JAMES HARGRAVE."

As I finished reading the paper, I looked around upon him whose hand had traced the characters. He was dead!

Read the story, "Giving Way to Temptation," to be issued in our next number. It will interest you. The author is Arthur Booth.

QUEER STONES

THERE are still to be found in Malta a number of small stones shaped and colored like the eyes, tongues and other parts of serpents. The superstitious among the Maltese connect these with the tradition that St. Paul when shipwrecked was cast on their island, and that it was there that while lighting a bundle of sticks for a fire a viper fastened on the Apostle's hand. St. Paul calmly shook the reptile off into the flames and no harm followed. The natives wear these stones as talismans, in which character they suppose them serviceable in warding off dangers from snake bites and poisons. They are found in St. Paul's Cave, imbedded in clay, and are set in rings and bracelets, and when found to be in the shape of a tongue or liver or heart are hung around the neck. They are also taken internally, dissolved in wine, which method is attended by more immediate results.

THE CURIOUS LITTLE MOLE

ACCORDING to report, a British scientist has turned his attention to the mole, with the result that some interesting data concerning this queer creature have been collected.

Under the edifice that the mole constructs above the surface of the ground will always be found a series of tunnels. A curious feature, almost invariably found, is a perpendicular run penetrating about a foot below the bottom of the nest, and then turning upward to meet another run. A mole is never, it is said, found in his nest, although it may be yet warm from his body when opened. Guided by smell and hearing, a mole frequently locates the nest of a partridge or pheasant above his run, and, penetrating it from below, eats the eggs. The adult mole is practically blind, but there are embryonic indications that the power of sight of the race has deteriorated.

The mole at work presents an interesting sight. His nose sinks into the soil as if it were a brad awl with a half boring, half pushing motion, and in a twinkling half of the creature's head is buried from view. Then up comes his powerful right foot, sliding close along the side of his nose. The foot, which is a kind of fine-pointed chisel, cuts the earth vertically until it extends as far forward as his short reach will permit, then with a rapid motion he pries the earth sidewise from his nose and so makes an opening. Very quickly the left foot performs the same operations on the other side, and meanwhile the gimlet-pointed nose has continued to bore.

In a few seconds his body is entirely out of sight, and only his queer little tail is visible. In three minutes, it is said, a mole will tunnel for a distance of a foot if he be in the least hurry to go about his business.

A naturalist once conceived the notion of ascertaining the amount of work a mole could accomplish in a given time. Accordingly, the experimenter turned a large specimen loose in the middle of a five-acre field. Five seconds, it is stated, after this mole had received its freedom, it had burrowed out of sight, and the observer, with his assistants, after driving a stake at the starting point, retired and left the little digger hard at work.

The start was made at eleven o'clock in the morning, and the direction taken was in the east. By six o'clock in the evening the mole is said to have dug some twenty-three feet in an irregular course, keeping, however, in the same general direction and not attempting any side galleries. Twenty-four hours after the start the tunnel had been driven thirty-one feet farther, with a number of side galleries, and four feet had been added to the extremity, making sixty-eight feet of the main line, thirty-six and a half feet of branches, or a total of 104½ feet of tunnels dug in twenty-five hours.

The bottom of the tunnels ran very evenly, about four inches below the surface. At certain points the hole was elliptical in shape, measuring one and a half inches in width by two inches in height, and sometimes it was triangular, measuring two inches each way. The surface of the ground was usually cracked and raised about an inch along the course of the tunnel.

THE CLUE IN THE CLOTH

By JAMES MADISON HOOPER

WHEN I was quite a youngster in years, circumstances, so to speak, drifted me into the police force of the chief sea-port town of my native State.

I may briefly say that, after about twelve months of service, either from some actual or fancied merit, I was told off for detective duty. Henceforth my rise in the force became rapid, and in the course of years I filled the post of sergeant, and finally inspector. It was while I held the first grade—that of sergeant—that I met with the adventure which I am about to relate.

One Monday morning, of the week prior to the Christmas of that particular year, a very startling bank robbery was discovered in our town. It was at the main office of the county bank where the burglary had been committed, and cash, notes and securities to the value of many thousands of dollars abstracted from the strong-room and safes.

A night porter, or watchman, had been surprised by the thieves, and first wounded, and then bound and gagged while the robbery was effected. According to this man's statement, the burglars had been employed for hours over their work, but oddly enough, the sub-manager, who slept on the bank premises, had heard nothing to arouse his suspicion. It was not until this gentleman came down at his usual hour on Monday morning that the discovery was made of the bank having been broken into, when, as a matter of course, one of our men was at once called in.

The case was a most important one, and my chief was good enough to evince his confidence in my professional abilities by telling me off for the special duty of investigating the affair. When I left the office precautions had already been taken to prevent the thieves from leaving the town should they be strangers, unless by chance they had got the start on us. The railways and the water-front were being watched vigilantly by detectives, and the telegraph wires had done their work.

Although the business of the bank was being carried out with its usual routine, I found, on arriving there, the chief officials were in a maze of bewilderment. From the chairman and directors—who had been hastily summoned—down to the assistant manager, everybody was in a fever of excitement coupled with dismay. Two of our officers were in charge, one over the strong-room, and the other keeping guard over a large hole in the floor of the secretary's room.

It was by this hole, presumably, that the thieves had entered—having sawed through the flooring boards from beneath, but how such a task had been effected without raising an alarm was at present a mystery. Apparently the get-away had been made by the same road, as a bag of silver had been found at the bottom of the excavation, which probably might have been dropped in the hurry of departure.

To find out where the hole led from was my first work, and taking the officer's flashlight, I dropped into the pit, which was quite wide enough and deep enough for two or three men to have stood up. I did not require the light, as daylight penetrated through a narrow tunnel, which appeared to be several yards in length. Along this I crawled until I came out into a cellar, which was empty, with the exception of a large pile of earth and gravel.

The bank premises stood at the corner of the junction of two of the main streets of the town, and I realized at once that I was in the basement of an unoccupied shop which was next-door. Doubtless the burglars had worked at their leisure, and might have been there unsuspected from the previous Saturday, or even for days before. One thing was quite certain, that the boring of this underground communication between the two buildings must have taken considerable time.

My ascent to the shop and rooms above was merely a matter of detail. I had no expectation of finding anything, and therefore was not disappointed at the result. Neither the doors nor the windows had been forced, nor, as far as I could see, tampered with, and the entrance to the building must have been made with false keys. I returned to the bank by the hole which the thieves had made, and on the way one idea was impressed upon me very forcibly.

Spite of finding of the bag of silver at the bottom of the hole under the secretary's room, which would seem to indicate that the burglars had departed by the same road as they came, I could not believe that, laden with their booty, they could have crept through this narrow passage. With this thought uppermost in my mind, I questioned the sub-manager as to whether he was sure that all the fastenings of the bank-doors were properly secured when he came down that morning and first discovered the bound and gagged watchman, and subsequently the robbery.

"Yes; certainly," was his first reply, promptly given. Then, after a pause, he continued: "I believe—I am almost sure; but in the surprise and the hurry of calling in the police, I cannot charge my mind."

Evidently there was little to be learned from this official, and without waiting further time, I visited the strong-room. The door of this had been drilled, and the lock blown to pieces by nitro-glycerine or some other explosive matter, while the inner safes had been forced with steel wedges or opened by aid of drills and jimmies. That the work had been done by a man, or men, accustomed to the use of these tools, I was assured, but there was wanting that neatness and skill indicative of the Chicago "cracksman", and in my own mind I had little doubt but that the burglars were a local gang.

I reported the result of my investigation to my chief, and held a lengthy consultation with him. It was decided that I should pay a visit to the bank watchman, who had received two wounds in his arm, and was lying at his own home, to which he had been removed at his personal wish, instead of to the hospital, as had been at first intended.

The statement of this man, as bearing on the case, was most important. According to his story—as retold to me by the chairman of directors—he had gone on duty at the bank at his accustomed hour on Sunday. Nothing had occurred to call for his attention until shortly after eight in the evening, when he had heard the assistant manager return from church. An hour or less from this he had

fancied that there was an unusual grating sound, as if coming from the direction of the secretary's room, and he had made his way there quietly to listen.

Thinking he was mistaken, he had opened the door, when, in rapid succession, two stabs had been aimed at him with a knife or dagger by a man with crape over his face. In trying to shield his breast, the watchman had received these strokes on his right forearm, and immediately afterward three other figures sprang upon him and gagged him so quickly and effectually as to make it impossible for him to raise an alarm. After this his arms and legs had been securely bound, and himself thrown like a log upon the bank floor, thereby receiving a severe bruise on the back of his head.

The whole of the thieves had their faces concealed, and he believed he would fail to identify any of them by their figures or general appearance. He had, he asserted, heard them at work until shortly before daybreak; but as regarded this latter portion of his statement, it might be taken as vague, for, according to his own account, he had fainted more than once, and had been found in that condition by the sub-manager.

This man, as described to me by the bank officials, was an ex-soldier, who had left the army with a good character. He had been in the service of the bank for some years as occasional messenger and night-watchman, and had the reputation of being highly trustworthy and reliable.

For the rest, he was a tall, powerfully-built man of middle age, married, and with a family.

I have omitted to mention that one of our officers on duty in the neighborhood reported that about an hour before daylight he had seen a touring car, containing three or four men, drive away rapidly from the direction of the bank—a circumstance that he would scarcely have noticed but from the fact that the chauffeur was exceeding the speed limit.

I had an interview with the surgeon who had been called in to attend to the watchman's hurts, and he informed me that the wounds on the man's arm were quite compatible with the statement he had made. He described them as two clean cuts on the right forearm, diagonally from left to right, and quite superficial, owing, no doubt, to the thickness of the coat which he wore at the time of the attack.

From the medical gentleman's house I went to see the injured man, and found him, as I had expected, in bed. He gave me a recapitulation of what had occurred on the previous night, which tallied almost to a word with what had been told to me by the chairman of directors. He complained bitterly at the way in which he had been abused and seemed to chafe at the thought of having been taken at a disadvantage by the sudden and unexpected attack of his assailants.

The thick coat which he had worn at the time was lying on a chair at his bedside, and I noticed that the right sleeve and shirt were saturated with blood. This garment I brought away with me, as it might be necessary to produce it on some future occasion as collateral evidence of an attempt at murder.

I had examined the coat once before, and scarcely know what induced me to look at it again on the following morning. The sleeve then was nearly dry, and there, plainly to be seen, were the two diagonal cuts clean through the cloth and lining.

Suddenly I gave a start and a prolonged whistle.

There were the cuts, sure enough, but they were from right to left, or in an exactly opposite direction from the wounds on the man's arm.

The whole thing was as plain to me now as if I had seen the burglary committed. The bank watchman was a confederate, and the two cuts had been self-inflicted, or done by one of his fellow-thieves when the coat was off, and the slashes afterward made on the sleeve of that garment, and, in the hurry, in the wrong direction. Subsequently, no doubt, he had been gagged and bound as a blind, with the intention of throwing the police off the scent.

I believed I had evidence now to convict this man before any jury, but his arrest for the present would be but little to the purpose. Although the payment of the notes and securities had been stopped, I felt that my reputation was at stake, that I should recover this for the bank, as well as secure a conviction of the whole gang.

I determined to wait and to watch, my subordinates in the meantime relaxing nothing in the vigilance which they were instructed to use in arresting any suspicious characters that were attempting to leave the town.

In a few days the watchman reported at the bank as again fit for duty, but by my advice he was relieved for the present from night work, and employed during the day as a messenger.

Since the robbery a guard of police officers had been on duty from the closing of the bank until morning; but new safes having been substituted for the old ones, and the door of the strong-room having been again made secure, affairs had settled down to their usual routine.

Of course, a large reward had been offered by the directors for the conviction of the burglars, and a further sum for any information which would lead to the recovery of the stolen property. So far, however, the robbery was shrouded in mystery to all persons except the chief of police, the head of my department, and myself.

Without any special confidence in them, or giving my reasons, I directed two thoroughly trustworthy plain-clothes men to watch the movements of the bank messenger. Christmas went by, and the old year had, within a day or so, run its course, and as yet they failed to see anything to arouse their suspicions.

Their report was that he went to and from the bank daily with great punctuality, scarcely ever was out of the house of an evening, and, if so, for only a quarter or half an hour's walk in the neighborhood. Further, they had observed no visitors.

On New Year's night, an hour or two after dark, I had been on some other business, and was returning to the office, when it occurred to me that I would take the street in which this man lived, on my way. There had been a sharp frost for several days, but on New Year's Eve a rapid thaw had set in, and now a fog—half mist, half drizzle—was shrouding city and river.

I had got within a few yards of this house—but on the opposite side of the narrow street—when I saw a tall, burly figure of upright carriage, which I made sure was my man. We were proceeding in opposite directions, but after I had walked a few yards farther I turned sharply on my heel and followed him. Evidently he had failed to notice me, for he kept straight on, making toward the river, until he reached its bank, when he turned up-stream along the piers.

I continued to dog his steps, just keeping him within view. Once or twice he stopped suddenly, as if listening, and I feared that he might discover me. But, apparently satisfied, he again passed rapidly on. Occasionally the mist would lift, revealing for an instant or two a ship's hull and masts, or the glimmer of a light. Then as quickly the fog would fall, and naught was to be seen twenty paces away, although the rapid rush of the tide and the crashing of the broken ice against the ship's bows

gave me time warning of the close proximity of the water.

More than once I thought I had missed my man, each time to be reassured by catching a glimpse of him through the fog. Presently I lost sight of him altogether, and although I ran rapidly in pursuit for several yards, I could neither see nor hear him. I listened intently. Not a sound was to be heard but the ceaseless rush of the tide on its way to the sea.

Suddenly, with startling distinctness, there was a sharp crack, which at first I took for the breaking of the ice, but the next moment there was a faint glimmer of a light. To my surprise I found that I was standing close to the dead wall of some building, and then it occurred to me that it was an old stable that I well remembered, although it was months, or perhaps years, since I had last been near it.

As I realized all this the light grew stronger, and I saw that it proceeded from a chink in the door, which was not quite closed. A few steps forward enabled me to see distinctly into the interior. One side was half-filled with straw, and in the far corner the bank messenger was stooping down, a lantern by his side. With his back toward me, I could not make out what he was doing, but all doubts were set at rest by the sharp, metallic chink of gold which I heard.

To dash open the door and bound toward my man was the impulse and act of a moment; but, quick as I was, he was too sharp for me, and rose to his feet, aiming a blow at my head with a heavy club which he carried. By an adroit movement I dodged what was intended to be a settling stroke; but in doing so I nearly lost my footing, and the next moment he had a firm grip of my throat and was choking me.

It was now a deadly struggle for mastery. Powerful and athletic as I was, I found that he was a stronger man than I. One or two efforts, however, which he made to force me backward, showed that what I lacked in strength I more than compensated for in activity and staying power.

Twice I nearly succeeded in throwing him, and when I was just congratulating myself in the end at being able to gain the victory, I became aware that we were not alone. Standing by the door, and in the act of fastening it, was another man. There was no time for thought, for I felt it was now or never, and with a desperate effort I threw my enemy by a cross-buttock. Even as he fell I received a heavy blow on the back of my head, and then all was oblivion.

When I recovered consciousness there was a buzz of voices in my ears, raised as if in anger. I opened my eyes for a moment, and then closed them as quickly. That one glance had shown me that I was lying where I fell, and that five men, including the bank messenger, were seated among the straw.

"Dead men tell no tales!" was the first distinct sentence that I could make out. "Give him another rap on the head to make sure."

"What are we to do with the body?" asked another voice.

"Pitch it into the river," replied the messenger, "and let the tide carry it out to sea. Even if they happen to fish up his carcass they'll think he walked in through the fog."

"Right you are," said another. "Take a look at him, Jim."

I held my breath as the man they had called Jim bent over me and placed his hand on my breast, for I knew that moment was a matter of life or death.

"Oh, he's dead as a herring!"

And, with an oath, the coward gave me a savage kick in the side.

"In with him, then!" said the other, and my body was dragged roughly along the stones. Then the stable-door was opened, and a couple of the crooks lifted me up in their arms and carried me out.

The kick had been so painful that I could scarcely suppress a cry of pain, and I felt sick and faint from the blow I had received at the back of my head. The fresh air, however, revived me, and I had now all my senses and was ready for any emergency.

A few steps brought them to the river bank, where were the remains of some old piles, standing black and slimy out of the dark waters. Giving my body a swing to and fro to get greater impetus, they pitched me headlong into the tideway, where I fell with a crash among the floating ice.

Fortunately I was a powerful swimmer, but I made no attempt to strike out until I had floated down the river some short distance. The tide, owing to the freshet from above, was running like a mill-race, and the water was bitterly cold. This intense chilliness, however, probably did more to revive me than could have done anything else, and when I at length struck out, it was with all my old vigor.

The fog had cleared off considerably, and I could make out plainly enough the objects on the water. I was close to where ships usually anchored or were berthed—which was the more unfortunate, as the bank was too high and steep for me to effect a landing. Had I not been a strong swimmer—weighed down as I was by my clothes and shoes—I must soon have drowned; and, as it was, I knew that I could not hold out much longer.

The current was now carrying me past some piles, upon which a wharf was built, and I felt that I must find a resting-place for a few moments on some cross-piece of timber, at whatever risk. By one of those lucky, or rather providential, chances in life, the first thing that I grasped proved to be a ladder used for embarking and landing from row-boats. It was slimy and slippery, and I was numbed with the cold, but I managed to drag myself up to the top.

The first person I met was one of the officers of my own division. He hurried me along to the nearest saloon, where a steaming glass of whisky and water put new life into my veins. I told the detective as briefly as possible what had happened, and dispatched him to the station for a platoon of police.

It was now ten o'clock, and I walked briskly backward and forward to keep up the blood circulation, the liquor dealer having kindly furnished me with a change of dry clothing. It was not long, however, before assistance arrived.

We made a raid on the stable without delay, and captured the whole gang. The notes and securities were found buried under the straw, and most of the gold and silver was recovered. Only a small sum was missing, which had been spent since the robbery.

We subsequently discovered that four out of the five were old hands; still they would no doubt have escaped with ten years for the bank robbery; but for the attempt to murder me, they got twenty years apiece.

No. 42, out August 1st, will contain a long detective story by J. R. Ward, entitled "The Considerate Burglar." Don't miss it! A more gripping story never was written.

THE COUNTERFEIT COROT

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

MR. T. BURGHALTER BILLINGS, millionaire, of Manhattan Borough, finished his breakfast, wiped his lips and glanced about him with complacency. Notwithstanding the objections of the family, he invariably breakfasted in his art gallery. It was an inspiration to him. He imbibed art, so he told himself, at the same time that he swallowed food.

"Your mail, sir," said Watkins.

Mr. T. Burghalter Billings seized and tore open the fat, white envelope at the top of the pile. He drew forth a letter, from which there dropped a card and a newspaper clipping. The card was very neat and very expensive. This is what it said:

SIR JOHN LLEWELLYN LLANDGRAFF, M. P.
London—Cecil Club
Temporary Chambers—W. 38th St., Manhattan, U. S. A.

The newspaper clipping next demanded the attention of the millionaire:

"Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff, M. P., left Liverpool for New York via the *Mesopotamia* last week. Sir John is well known to the inner circle among men of art as a man of rare discrimination. His collection, made up chiefly of the output of the men of 1830, is small, it is true, but is choice in the inverse ratio of its size. He comes to America, unfortunately for him, to sell. He has been involved for years. His paintings come with him and he will exhibit them privately to the few in New York who really know what's what."

The letter was politely personal and was addressed, of course, to the millionaire. It was inscribed in the fine, small, and yet bold handwriting of the man who knew how to do everything as it should be done. The letter contained no apology. Sir John had been referred to Mr. Billings, so he said, by a mutual friend in England, who had assured the writer that Mr. Billings had quietly gathered together some of the finer specimens.

Mr. Billings drew a long breath and glanced about the room. "I should think so," he breathed easily; "I should think these would make a bit of a stir."

The writer of the letter indicated further that he had come to New York to sell at once—speedy sales being impossible across the water—and he would sell cheap. As he had neared the conclusion of the letter, the writer's hand had trembled. He wrote as a man writes whose eyes are slowly filling with tears.

"Poor chap," thought the millionaire, "I know how he feels. Suppose I had to part with mine."

The soft light in the big room had gently brightened with the ascending sun, and Billings, the millionaire, stood off some twenty feet and silently drank in the merits of one of his Daubigny's—"The Glory of the Dusk."

"I hope I'll never have to sell it," he went on. He didn't know, poor Billings, that in the whole world there were only six or eight of Daubigny's "Glory of the Dusk," and that his was one of the six or eight that wouldn't sell.

"What a great thing," he told himself, "it is to own originals—to know originals. I wonder how many chaps own copies, and think——

"A good Corot now, or two," he added softly to himself, his eye spotting the bare spaces in the gallery, "a good Corot—cheap."

He looked up Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff in the latest English "Who's Who," found that that gentleman was much better known as a connoisseur than the card, the letter, or the clipping even, had indicated, and instantly made up his mind.

"I'll toddle right around to Thirty-eighth street," he assured himself.

Around in Thirty-eighth street, in somewhat spacious private quarters, he found what he sought. Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff opened to him.

"For obvious reasons," smiled the M. P., "I keep no footman."

He glanced upon the card of Billings with interest. A gentle flush rose to his cheek, a new fire to his eye.

"Ah," he said softly, "I wrote you personally." There were one or two other prosperous New Yorkers strutting about in the rooms. Billings knew none of them. Sir John paid them but little attention, but holding the hand of Billings in his hand insistently, he led his guest from frame to frame.

"This by Rousseau," he would say, "'The Dead Day.' It has a history. But look, this Fontainebleau, surely that speaks for itself—eh, friend?"

Billings of New York examined each with a critical eye. "They don't compare with mine," he thought to himself proudly. He was quite right. They did not. But at last he started suddenly. He pointed gleefully to a masterpiece in an obscure corner.

"That," he exclaimed to Sir John, "is certainly worth while."

Sir John turned away his head. "That," he returned sadly. "I put it in the dark, hoping it would escape notice. If I have to part with that——" His voice trembled.

"The subject?" demanded the millionaire.

"The Everglade"—returned the baronet, his voice sinking to a whisper of regret—"Carot."

"Carot." The New York millionaire shivered with joy. His business intinct rose to the surface at once.

"How much, Sir John?" he asked.

Sir John only sighed. "Poor Corot," he exclaimed, "how little they thought of him in the fifties, and now——"

"How much, Sir John?" persisted the New York millionaire.

"The Corot is not for sale," returned the Englishman firmly.

But it was for sale, and Billings, of New York, took it in, after many days of argument, of pleading, for just six thousand dollars—the greatest bargain in New York.

Billings, of New York, breakfasted with "The Everglade in the morning; he tossed off his night-cap with a bow to it at night.

"Au revoir, Corot," he would call to it, backing reverently from the room each time he left.

"It's a great thing to be a connoisseur," he told himself, "a great thing to know Art, when a man sees Art."

Back in Thirty-eighth street a sad-faced gentleman smiled softly to himself, and counted over many rolls of bills.

"The graft was good," he murmured to himself. He waved his hand toward the East. "Paris," he said, "I thank you for what you taught me. The graft was good."

He laughed silently. "To think of that Corot, too, that I sold friend Billings—cost me two thousand francs in France, where I couldn't have sold it to a cab driver for a dollar—it brings me six thousand from Billings, of New York."

Hastily he scrawled a cablegram in cipher. "Send me some more at once," he said, "the graft is good."

Two months later he had received a fresh cargo of Delacroixs, of Troyons, of Dupres—and one or two new ones, just finished by Corot, or Corot's shade, if Corot happened to be dead or disabled, as it were.

"I'll move up to Ninety-sixth street now," said Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff to himself.

It is time to make things clear.

This man was not Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff, M. P., of London. He was Shifty Shift, of the Borough of Manhattan, jack of all trades and master of all, at that.

"It's the safest graft I ever struck," said Shifty to himself. "The millionaire who finds out will be fly enough to keep mum. That's sure."

Now, it so happened that Sir John Llandgraff was not the only vendor of genuine art in the Borough of Manhattan. From the first day of the year to the last, all New York buys and sells art. When Twenty-third street ceases selling, Twenty-eighth starts up. Small collections seek the side street; big collections, block the main thoroughfare. In the course of the year transpires the Derby Day in Art—the Anglo-American Studio Sale on Forty-second street. The Anglo-American Studio knows what to sell and how to sell it; it displays only first class wares and it makes its patrons pay. Lovers of art from the wide world throng the Anglo-American Studio to see; but it takes a Croesus to buy. Billings was a Croesus. He went first to look, and hoped later to buy. He wanted some companion for the gem of his collection, "The Everglade" by Corot.

He fetched up all standing one day in the East Room in the Anglo-American Studio.

"What in thunder!" he exclaimed.

There, hung in a strong light, flanked by insignificance, was "The Everglade," by Corot. Billings, the millionaire, gasped, glanced at his catalogue and gasped again. There it was:

"2534. Landscape, 'The Everglade'—Corot."

There was no mistaking it. He backed out of the room and approached an auctioneer. "Come here," he said. "Who painted that?"

The auctioneer smiled.

"A boy could tell it a mile away," he answered. "That's a genuine Corot, all over."

Yes, it was. There was no doubt about it—not a scintilla of doubt. Billings could see the difference. Upon his brain was a mental picture of his six-thousand-dollar treasure back in his home; it dulled and faded before this masterpiece. This was the diamond of the first water; his was glass—he could see, himself.

"I've been sold," he wailed, "by that——"

He went back home and thought about it. The more he thought the more difficult the matter became. He must keep it quiet. All his friends had seen his Corot. It wouldn't do now to make a clean breast of it. He would rather be plucked than laughed at.

In his uncertainty, he wrote the Police Department of New York—wrote anonymously.

In the Police Department of New York there was a man of the name of Boneset Smith. What Shifty Shift was in the underworld, Boneset Smith was in the police department. Boneset Smith had heard of Shifty Shift, and Shifty Shift had heard of Boneset Smith. Their admiration was mutual. But never had they lain eyes on the other. Boneset had invariably arrived just too late on every job. Shifty had always kept just a head and neck ahead.

Boneset read the anonymous communication of Billings, took it to heart, visited a millionaire or two, and sagely shook his head.

"This has all the earmarks of friend Shifty Shift," he told himself. He started in to accomplish the hitherto impossible—to catch Shifty Shift with the goods on for once.

"I'll get him, blamed if I don't," said Boneset Smith.

Shifty's crime was the crime of counterfeit. He was selling copies for originals. He was getting thousands for canvases worth ten, or twenty, or fifty at the outside.

"I'll get the goods on you," was the wireless message from Boneset Smith to Shifty Shift.

Shifty Shift, up in Ninety-sixth street, shivered. But he laughed. "Come on," he wired back, subconsciously.

Boneset didn't know, as yet, where Shifty was. He didn't know either what was the chief of Shifty's mottoes:

"While Headquarters tries to grab you for one trick, pull off another."

A week passed. And one day Boneset Smith, of the Department, stepped up to the door of a suite of rooms in the Hotel Astor, and knocked gently on the door. The door was opened by a pudgy little man with red hair and a red face.

"Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff?" queried Boneset Smith, adding to himself: "Can it be possible that this blockhead is Shifty Shift?"

"I am Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff," answered the pudgy little man.

"You come with me," said Boneset Smith.

He came, reluctantly, and together the two sought Headquarters and the third degree. The third degree rolled off Sir John as water rolls from a duck.

"All of that you like, officer," he smiled.

At the end of a bad hour Boneset Smith had discovered what he should have known in the first instance—that the real Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff stood before him.

"I've got to let you go, I guess," he said.

Sir John smiled.

"Why not make the incident international?" he urged.

Then, just as he turned away, Boneset Smith caught him by the arm.

"By George," he exclaimed, "you're a sport. You've got to help me."

"How?"

"Why, in this very thing, Sir John."

Sir John, pudgy, fat, matter of fact, sniffed with excitement.

"I'll help you," he conceded. "I'll help you to find the counterfeit John Llewellyn Llandgraff."

At that instant the counterfeit John Llewellyn Llandgraff was where all lovers of art should be, and where Boneset Smith did not seek him. For Boneset Smith knew that Shifty Shift no more loved Art for Art's sake than he loved law and order. But Shifty Shift was there, nevertheless, for Art meant money just then, to him.

Now, there was at the Anglo-American Studios a system in vogue that governed and regulated sales. No.

11187, a Vibert, would be put up. Billings, Jones, Brown or Robinson, of New York, would bid it in and buy it. Its price was $2,500; in this instance, we will say, a high price for this particular Vibert. Jones makes his check for $250, or ten per cent of the price. He is presented with a voucher on which the number 11187, and the price $2,500, and the amount of the deposit, $250, all appear. A day or two later Jones sends for his picture, gets No. 11187, pays the bill, and carries his purchase with him. Added to this system, which is simple, is the vigilance of attendants, accustomed to big values, on the constant outlook for thievery. But there was a man greater than system, more careful than a corps of vigilant attendants. That man was Shifty Shift.

An auctioneer was crying his wares:

"We'll sell a few small ones," he said to his crowd; "Americana—just little things to tuck in the spaces, one hundred dollars, two hundred and fifty, and so on. Trifles, but works of art, all right. Look at this Beckwith. It's a bit higher, but look at the scheme of the coloring. It starts at——"

At the end of fifteen minutes, the auctioneer had sold to Shifty Shift, for hundreds merely, a J. G. Martindale, "The Pot o' Gold," numbered on the catalogue as No. 313.

Now, Shifty Shift didn't want No. 313, "The Pot o' Gold," by Martindale. But there was something he did want badly. In the East Room he had gazed with lustful eyes on a wonderful canvas.

"No. 2354. Landscape. 'The Everglade'—Corot."

In the Anglo-American Studio there was system; there were attendants—there was also Shifty Shift. There was only one man who could have done this thing that was done; there was only one way to do it. Inside of six hours a wonderful bit of canvas had left the Studio. Its number, ostensibly, was No. 313. But its name was not "The Pot o' Gold." That bit of Americana was still hanging on the wall back in the studio, numbered with the number of a masterpiece, No. 2534. And Shifty Shift had done it.

"Now," whispered Boneset Smith to a pudgy little man, "you're game, are you?"

The pudgy little man nodded. And Boneset Smith pushed a button up in Ninety-sixth street. There was no name opposite the button. Just now the trail of Shifty Shift was an unblazed trail.

Inside of two minutes they were on the third floor, and Boneset Smith had placed his foot inside an inside door and held it there. He didn't have to do it. The door was opened wide.

"Come in." The voice that bade them enter was a voice, sad, gentle, kind.

"By George," gasped Boneset Smith to himself, "I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that this is Shifty Smith. He's an Old Master or I don't know Art."

Boneset Smith looked at his companion. His companion nodded.

"I—I'd like to buy a masterpiece or two," stammered the real Sir John, looking about for any signs of masterpieces. There was not a picture in sight. Shifty Shift gulped.

"Oh, yes," he answered, taking from Sir John one of the personal letters he had sent out to millionaires, "yes, to be sure. I've got a thing or two." He glanced narrowly at Boneset Smith, but that gentleman gave no sign.

"I want something real, something genuine," went on Sir John, laying stress on his words, "and I rely entirely on your judgment; and I don't want to pay a fancy price. You see?"

"I see," answered Shifty Shift, "just come this way."

Boneset Smith winked at Sir John. "Nailed," said the expressive eye of Boneset Smith. Sir John nodded quite as expressively.

Shifty Shift drew back a curtain. "There's something you may like," suggested Shifty Shift.

It was "The Everglade," by Corot—"The Everglade," not of Billings, but of the Anglo-American Studio.

Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff stood rooted to the spot. "By thunderation!" he exclaimed.

Shifty Shift smiled.

"Corot has signed his name with every stroke of the brush, I wager," he said softly, sadly, gently.

Boneset Smith's eyes beamed. They certainly were getting the goods on this seller of counterfeits. Again he flashed a message to Sir John. "Close the deal." That was what he flashed.

For fully three minutes Sir John did not speak.

"How much do you want for that Corot?" he asked.

Shifty Shift hesitated. He knew what it was worth. But he wanted to sell it at once. For he didn't know how soon it might be missed.

"Fifteen thousand dollars," he returned. Boneset Smith whistled softly in admiration of the man's nerve.

Boneset Smith had been right. Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff, the real Sir John, was a dead game sport. Furthermore, he had the instinct of a true collector of Art. That instinct was to collect, by means fair or foul, but by any means to collect—and never stop collecting. And Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff, the real, knew nothing save that a canvas worth twenty-five thousand dollars, if worth a cent, was being offered to him for fifteen thousand dollars. He could afford to take a change. Oh, yes, he was straight; he was honest—but there are some things too strong for human weakness, after all. He pulled out a roll of bills, for he had been on his way to the Anglo-American Studios himself when Boneset Smith had captured him for this excursion.

"I'll buy that genuine Corot for fifteen thousand dollars," he said, and counted out the money.

As he did so, the hand of Boneset Smith descended heavily upon the arm of Shifty Shift.

"You're my prisoner," he said.

Shifty shivered. He was a thief, and the law had collared him at last.

"What for?" he gasped, for he knew now that Boneset Smith stood before him.

"For selling a counterfeit Corot," exclaimed Boneset Smith, "for genuine."

The words were as music to the ears of Shifty Shift. He glanced appealingly to the real Sir John. Sir John shook his head.

"Officer," he said, "this Corot is genuine."

Boneset Smith gasped. He saw that Sir John had spoken the truth. But he recovered.

"Sir," he said to his prisoner, "I arrest you for false impersonation. You don't deny that you've been selling stuff under the name of Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff."

"I am Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff," answered Shifty Shift, straightening up.

"This is Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraff," returned Boneset Smith, "the real Sir John.

Shifty Shift smiled and nodded to the real Sir John. "Do you want this Corot?" he asked.

"Officer," said the real Sir John, "for all I know to the contrary, there may be two Sir John Llewellyn Llandgraffs. England is a devil of a large place, and the name is very common over there."

Shifty Shift counted the money and thrust it into his pocket. "The Corot belongs to you," he said.

It wasn't until two days later that Boneset Smith was informed of the theft of the real Corot from the Art Gallery of the Anglo-American Studio. By that time the real Sir John and the Corot were on the briny deep, and, of course, Sir John had paid for the Corot, and—possession happens to be nine-tenths of the law.

As for Shifty Shift, he's engaged in buying—not selling—the mythical shares of a corporation that never existed; and by a method all his own, he's making money at it. See the ad. of a stockholder of the Ultramarine Blue Copper Mining Company in all the daily papers. That's Shifty Shift.

As for Boneset Smith, he's still hot upon the trail.

Do not forget that the next feature story was written for us by the world-famous William Hamilton Osborne.

HONESTY IN PRISONERS

RECENTLY a visitor to the Tombs, New York City, dropped $140, and although he was pretty sure where he had lost the money, he gave up hope of getting it. Besides, there was a repugnance to telling how careless he had been when the very surroundings should have enjoined caution upon him. Strange to relate, a prisoner found the money and duly handed it in to the warden.

Once during a visit to Sing Sing a Manhattan politician in an experimental mood left his gold watch and chain on a work bench in one of the buildings where convicts were engaged in fabric work. He kept a sharp eye out, for he didn't propose to lose his watch, which had been presented to him by admiring associates of a ward club of which he had been president. After ten minutes the politician returned and could not find his watch. He had noticed several convicts passing in and out, one of them passing quite near him. He complained of his loss to the head keeper. The convicts were lined up. One of them, the man who passed close, grinned. "Are you looking for your watch?" he asked. "I certainly am," said the politician severely. "It's in your pocket." So it was. The man who passed close had put it there. He was a clever pick-pocket. He enjoyed the laugh, and then said: "If it had only been gold." The politician retorted that it was gold. "Oh, no it isn't," said the convict. "But it was given to me by my club. It is an expensive watch." The convict grinned again. "I know the club," said he, "and I know the man they gave the money to buy it. He's up here now. He bought a pretty good watch—a fairly good one—but it's plated."

EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATES VALUABLE SAFEGUARD

THE employment certificate as a safeguard for the health and education of working children as well as a proof of age is discussed in a leaflet just issued by the Children's Bureau, United States Department of Labor, for use in the back-to-school campaign which is being carried on in 38 States by the local child-welfare committees of the Council of National Defense. The need for such safeguards is emphasized by the bureau's experience in administering the former Federal child-labor law, when one-fourth of the 19,546 children under sixteen years of age to whom certificates of age were issued were found to be unable to sign their own names legibly.

The bureau points out that the employment certificate safeguards the employer as well as the child, for if the employer has in his possession an employment certificate secured in good faith stating that the child is of legal age to work, he is protected against prosecution for violating the age provision of the child-labor law.

"An adequate child-labor law," the pamphlet states, "should provide that a child must obtain an employment certificate before he can be legally employed, and that in order to obtain it he must be of a certain age and must have attained a minimum standard of education and physical fitness."

Granted a good law, its proper enforcement depends upon the officer who issues the certificates. Often this work is delegated to an inexperienced clerk or some other person not fitted or trained for the work. Too much importance can not be attached to the personality of the issuing officer.

The issuing officer, in determining whether a child applying for a certificate is of legal age to receive it, finds his surest proof in a birth record. Because the registration of births in the United States is far from complete, many children have no birth certificate.

"No child should be given a certificate to work until he has completed certain minimum educational requirements," says the pamphlet. In some States a child can not secure a work permit until he is sixteen years old, unless he has completed the eighth grade, but in other States thousands of children who are barely able to read and write are permitted by law to leave school for work each year. Such a child's chance of success is slight, because skilled positions require school training. The peacetime army of unemployed is chiefly made up of unskilled workers.

Before granting an employment certificate many States require a child to have a physical examination by a public medical officer who will decide whether or not he is physically able to perform the work he intends to do. Without such a provision, a boy who, unknown to himself, has serious heart trouble, might accept work as a messenger or a position which required the lifting of heavy weights. In some States a child is re-examined every time he gets a new job to see what effect his industrial experience has had upon him. Defects acquired are then corrected. A few issuing officers refer children who are physically unfit for work to school nurses or public health nurses or clinics, so that corrective and preventive steps may be taken.

Many children are neither at school nor at work. To remedy this situation, some States require a child to have the promise of a job before he leaves school. In order to insure the child's return to school between jobs the employer receives the child's employment certificate and is required to return it to the issuing officer if the youngster leaves his work for any reason. Close cooperation between the issuing officer and the compulsory school attendance department is necessary if the child is actually to go back.

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

CAPTAIN CHARLES N. BRACKETT.

CAPTAIN CHARLES N. BRACKETT, the old chief Special Agent at the Custom-House in New York, was a well-known man. When you desired to find a special agent you had to seek the basement of the old Custom-House. Entering by a door on William street, you soon reached the rooms, which occupied the southeast corner of the basement.

In a large room there were numerous desks, and a private room reserved for the chief and his clerk. Frauds of every kind upon customs revenue were investigated by these officers, and, as will be seen, they must have had a thorough understanding of the whole business of the Custom-House.

Captain Brackett was a hearty-looking, jovial man. We found him with his coat off and a clerk beside him, writing an important report to be sent to the Washington authorities.

"My dear sir," he said, in his cheerful way, "I'm up to my eyes in work, but what can I do for you?"

The work in hand did not stop, but the captain talked along, answered questions, recalled reminiscences, cracked his jokes, made sly hits—just as if he was perfectly at leisure.

He held the office of Fire Marshal and other positions under the city government, and became one of the most efficient officers under the general government. He was born in New York. In Washington any report bearing his signature commanded great attention.

One reason for his efficiency as a chief special agent was that he served so long in the active duties of an officer that he was perfectly posted in regard to all the doings of smugglers and other depredators upon the United States revenue.

"You are pretty well posted on the smugglers?" we asked.

"Ha, ha," he laughed. "They are sharp folks, but I've traced out their numerous tricks from the cabin to the bilge."

The allusion to the bilge is explained by the fact that cigars are sometimes wrapped in oil-cloth and secreted in the space between the ceiling and keel of a steamship where foul dampness and water-rats are to be found. If the Custom-House officers do not find these bags, they are thrown overboard to confederates in boats.

ROBERT A. PINKERTON.

THE manager of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency in New York was Robert A. Pinkerton, the son of the founder. He was a man so modest and averse to notoriety, that he was not as much known as many detectives of far less ability and less successful work.

A married man, he lived in Brooklyn, and devoted himself to the business of manager with the utmost fidelity to the interests of all concerned. His father considered him to be a detective of first-class ability, which he certainly should have been, as he was a pupil of the veteran himself.

The business of the office under his direction was conducted with great elaboration and system. There were numerous clerks, and the details of every case from day to day were embodied in reports. It is known exactly what each operative is doing, and when it is necessary for a new character to appear on the scene, the right man is provided. The Pinkerton office supplied persons to take any character which might be necessary to unravel a mystery of crime.

The reader will be interested in a description of some of the "real detectives" of the agency, as given by Mr. Allan Pinkerton himself. Here is the portrait of Shadow Roche.

"Having settled on Roche as the proper man for the position, I summoned him to my private office. Roche was a German. He was about forty-five years old, of spare appearance, and rather sallow or tanned complexion. His nose was long, thin and peaked, eyes clear, but heavy-looking, and hair dark. He was slightly bald, and though he stooped a little, was five feet ten inches in height. He had been in my employ for many years, and I knew him thoroughly and could trust him.

"I informed him of the duties he was to perform in a certain case, and gave him minute instructions how he was to act. He was to keep out of sight as much as possible in Montgomery. Porter would manage to see him on his arrival, unknown to any one there, and would point out to him Maroney, the suspect, and his wife, and the messenger Chase, who boarded at the Exchange; also Patterson, the saloon-keeper, and all the other suspected parties (Maroney was suspected of robbing the Adams Express Company of a large amount of money). He was not to make himself known to Floyd, of the Exchange, or to McGibony, the local detective. I had also given Porter similar instructions. I suggested to him the propriety of lodging at some low boarding-house where liquor was sold.

"He was to keep me fully posted by letter of the movements of all suspected parties, and if any of them left town, to follow them, and immediately inform me by telegraph who they were and where they were going, so that I could fill his place in Montgomery.

"Having given him his instructions, I selected for his disguise a German dress. This I readily procured from my extensive wardrobe, which I keep well supplied by frequent attendance at sales of old articles from Europe.

"When he had rigged himself up in his long German coat, his German cap with the peak, and a most-approved

pair of emigrant boots, he presented himself to me with his long German pipe in his mouth, and I must say I was much pleased with his disguise, in which his own mother would not have recognized him. He was as fine a specimen of a Boche as could be found.

"Having thoroughly impressed on his mind the importance of the case, and my determination to win the esteem of the company by ferreting out the thief, if possible, I started him for Montgomery, where he arrived in due time."

Of Roche, in Montgomery, he said:

"Roche was to do nothing but 'spot' the suspected parties, and follow any one of them who might leave town. He was to be a Hun, and he acted the character to perfection. He could be seen sitting outside of his boarding-house with his pipe in his mouth, and he apparently did nothing but puff, puff, puff, all day long.

"There was a saloon in town where lager was sold, and he could occasionally be found here sipping his beer; but although apparently a stupid, phlegmatic man, taking no notice of what was going on around him, he drank in, with his lager, every word that was said.

This case, while long and tedious, proved one of the most successful ever undertaken by Mr. Pinkerton, and nearly all the money was recovered. The agency has been employed by the Adams Express Company from that day to the present time.

Here is the portrait of a female detective in Mr. Pinkerton's graphic style:

"One afternoon, in the early days of April, a lady stepped into the store of Messrs. Dunstable, in Pittsburg, who was before entirely unknown to any of their assistants. She had a youthful and pleasing face, of singularly clear and fair complexion, and enhanced in its attractiveness by full, earnest, bluish gray eyes. Her dress was rich, without being at all pretentious, its various constituents being presumptive rather of a quiet and perfect taste, than of a slavish devotion to prevailing fashions. Comporting well with these surroundings was her personal demeanor, which was dignified and self-contained.

"She then walked forward to where a young clerk was waiting alone at one of the counters.

"The latter was a slender and graceful girl of about nineteen summers, of not very imposing stature, but having shapely, aquiline features, and large expressive black eyes. She was also gifted with those rarer charms of her sex, a luxurious growth of dark glossy hair, and a white hand of perfect proportions.

"Surveying her with unobtrusive interest, the visitor requested this girl to show her some varieties of hose, the counter being devoted to fabrics of that class. On this being done, she spent a few moments in selecting what she wanted, which the assistant then proceeded to make up into a parcel. When the purchase was paid for, the customer seemed on the point of addressing some sort of inquiry to the young girl, but just at the moment two very demonstrative shoppers came over to the same counter, and she confined herself to a polite remark about the weather. With a pleasant 'Good-afternoon,' she then left the store."

On the following day the female detective again visited the store, for her mission in Pittsburg was to become acquainted with and obtain the confidence of this shop girl, who was the sister-in-law of a man sought for a crime. The young girl became quite intimate with the detective. Alluding to the period after the second visit to the store, Mr. Pinkerton stated:

"In her apartment at the Diamond Hotel, Mrs. Pelham was shortly very busy writing for my agency an accurate report of her interview with Lizzie Greenleaf, and the prospects of its leading to a serviceable intimacy."

It will be seen that in the management of the New York office of the Pinkerton Agency, Mr. Robert A. Pinkerton had great responsibilities. His own training as a detective enabled him to put the right men in the right places, and this accounts for the remarkable success of most of the investigations of the agency. Whenever he considered it necessary in an important case he made the arrests himself.

He was of the medium height, equally proportioned, and moved with an active step. His face was intelligent, and marked by evidence of a calm and resolute nature, and he was very courteous in his manners, and highly esteemed in all the relations of life.

Next in this series are George Newberry and J. H. Mowatt. Their biographs are particularly interesting. We earnestly request all our readers to get this article.

HOW MANY STARS ARE THERE?

WE think of the multitude of the stars and would in all probability say that on a clear, frosty, moonless night we see millions of them. In reality, on such a night, if we leave out the faintly luminous Milky Way, we see fewer than 3,000 distinct stars. In the whole starry sphere, of which we see only half at any given time, there are only a score of first magnitude stars, beginning with Sirius, the brightest of them, and including stars like Orion's right shoulder and left knee; Betelgeux and Rigel, Vega and Arcturus. Of stars of the second magnitude, like six of the seven stars in the Dipper, there are in all sixty-five. Of stars of the third magnitude, like the remaining star of the Dipper, where the handle joins the bowl, there are 190. Of the stars of the fourth magnitude, under 500; of the fifth, just over a thousand, and of the sixth, the extreme limit visible to the naked eye on the best nights, sometimes over 3,000, making in all fewer than 5,000 stars visible at any time to the naked eye; while only half, or about 2,500, can be seen at one time.

But even an opera glass shows a great many more, and larger and larger telescopes disclose more and more. Yet they seem limited in number, at least if it be true that the light-carrying ether does not absorb and extinguish the light of the most remote. For if they were really infinite in number, and their light came to be impeded, the night sky would be luminous. A small telescope which shows stars down to the ninth magnitude will add about a hundred thousand stars to those visible to the naked eye, while the largest telescopes will show stars down to about the sixteenth magnitude. Arglander's star chart includes between 300,000 and 400,000 stars counted and plotted by hand, while the modern photographic survey, in which the stars are made to map themselves, goes up to the high figure of 15,000,000. It is computed that the best optical means which human genius can devise may show 100,000,000. If this be, as is supposed, close to the total of existing stars, and if we remember that the population of the earth is computed to be somewhat in excess of 1,500,000,000, then it follows that there is only one star for each fifteen persons, or, say, a star for each three families.

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER XI (*Continued*)

THE man's story seemed plausible enough, and after a few minutes' thought the lawyer asked:

"Excuse me, but you haven't told me your name."

"I forgot. My name is Emory West. I am engaged in the grain business."

All of Mr. Frazer's suspicions were now allayed, and without any more questioning he got into the buggy, which was standing at the corner outside of the hotel.

The man calling himself Emory West followed the lawyer into the buggy, and then the two drove off, West telling Mr. Frazer all about Foss' pretended pursuit.

The buggy was soon rolling along the Berkely road at a rapid rate. The horse was a fast one, and West increased his speed by belaboring him with the whip.

The road along which Mr. Frazer was being driven was a lonely one, and the houses were few and far between. The conversation finally dragged, and both the lawyer and West were silent.

After some time Mr. Frazer commenced to grow uneasy, as they turned into a side road leading to the woods, and he asked:

"Mr. West, how long will it be before we will reach your house?"

As the lawyer asked this question, he noticed that the man's face wore a scowl, and so deeply engaged was West that he did not hear what was said, and Mr. Frazer remarked in a louder tone of voice:

"Mr. West, how far are we from your house?"

They were now in the center of the woods, and not a soul was around. At this question the man stopped the horse suddenly, and, turning upon Mr. Frazer with a savage oath, exclaimed, as he clutched the lawyer by the throat:

"Richard Frazer, I have no house; you are now in my power, and unless you do as I say I will strangle you to death."

The man's grip was like a vise on the lawyer's throat, but for all that Mr. Frazer struggled manfully to disengage himself from the coward's grasp.

"Take your hands off of my throat, you villain," cried the lawyer, and he made a clutch for West's throat.

Then ensued a fearful struggle for mastery. The horse started, and the contestants were thrown out of the buggy. The villain fell underneath, and Mr. Frazer succeeded in jumping to his feet.

The man who sought to kill him was not far behind the lawyer. He had been disguised, and, when he fell, his mustache and false hair fell off. Now he stood glaring at the lawyer.

As Mr. Frazer looked at his antagonist he started back and exclaimed:

"Peter Cole?"

"Yes, Richard Frazer, it is Peter Cole, and I have made up my mind to kill you."

The lawyer was unarmed, while Cole now pointed a revolver at Mr. Frazer's breast. There was a look of venom in the rascal's eyes far worse than the old masters gave to the devils in their paintings.

Mr. Frazer saw that it would be useless to try and master such a fiend with such odds on his side. He turned around suddenly and commenced to run away as fast as his legs would carry him.

The lawyer was no match for Cole, who was the younger, and who was a swift runner. The minute the scoundrel saw that Mr. Frazer was trying to run away he bounded after him with the ferocity of a wild beast.

Fear lent Mr. Frazer wings, and he ran faster than he had ever done before in his life. He saw a quarry a short distance away on an elevated mound, and he tried his utmost to reach this before his pursuer could come up to him.

On the lawyer went, and he reached the quarry only a few yards ahead of Cole.

He stooped over and tried to pick up a stone.

As Mr. Frazer did this, Cole jumped upon his back and bore him to the ground, causing him to knock his face against a stone, which cut a deep gash in the side of his right cheek. The blood gushed out from the wound and covered the stones.

It was a struggle for life, and the lawyer fought with all his strength. Over and over rolled the combatants, first one being on top and then the other, the sharp rocks cutting their clothes and bruising their flesh.

"Curse you!" cried Cole, as he grasped Mr. Frazer by the throat. "I'll kill you now!"

"Peter—Cole—let—me—go."

"I won't."

Cole was now on top of Mr. Frazer, and he tightened his grasp on his throat as he pressed his knees hard against the lawyer's chest.

"I'll pound your face to a jelly," hissed Cole; and then he proceeded to carry out his threat.

The scoundrel picked up a rock with his disengaged hand, and raised it above his head.

"Spare my life, Peter Cole, and——"

Thud!

A sickening sound followed, the lawyer's body gave a convulsive shiver, and Richard Frazer had breathed his last, murdered by the man who had tried to force him to yield his daughter to him.

The assassin arose to his feet, covered with the blood of his victim.

"I must get out of here quick," Cole exclaimed, as he looked around to see if any one had witnessed the deed.

The murderer saw that he was safe. He now stooped over, took the murdered man's jewelry from his person, and, after searching the pockets and transferring the contents to his own, he turned around and hurried toward Berkely.

Cole steered clear of the main road, and soon reached a

deserted hut on the outskirts of the woods. It was here that he had intended to murder the lawyer.

He entered the hut, took off his clothes, washed himself and put on another suit. He dug a hole near a large tree, and put the clothes, which were sprinkled with the blood of the murdered man, in it, covering them over with the earth.

Just as he was about to go away, a loud laugh greeted Cole's ears.

"He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Cole turned around, with a look of terror upon his face, and he clutched his revolver nervously as he prepared to defend himself. No one was in sight, and the murderer thought that it was only his imagination.

"Am I growing weak-minded, that I should start at such a thing as that? I could have sworn that I heard something."

"He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha!"

This time Cole knew that he had not been mistaken. Who could it be?

"I'll kill the person who is doing this," the fellow hissed, as he cocked his pistol and strode away toward a clump of bushes, where he thought that the laughter came from.

"He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha!"

When Cole reached the bushes, and was about to break through them, the laugh broke out again. But this time it came from the direction of the hut.

Peter Cole rushed toward the hut, and searched around it in every direction, cursing furiously, and swearing vengeance upon the person who was doing this. All was silent again for a few moments, and then

"He, he, he! Ha, ha, ha!"

Again the laugh rang out, but this time it came from the bushes. Cole rushed back to the bushes, but in spite of the search he made, he could see no one. He was fairly foaming at the mouth with rage, and if he had found the person who was fooling him, he would have killed him instanter.

"M-u-r-d-e-r-e-r!"

This was said in a loud and solemn voice, and in a drawling manner. The guilty wretch started and turned pale. He trembled in every limb, and for some minutes his anger fled. Some one, then, must have seen him kill the lawyer.

All was silent after this. Cole waited some time longer, and when he heard nothing more of the mysterious voice, he hurried away from the spot, reached Berkely a short time afterwards, where he took a train for Oakland, and then crossed to San Francisco by the boat.

No sooner had Cole taken his departure, than a face peered out of the second-story window of the hut, and after looking cautiously around, a hideous body jumped to the ground, the possessor running toward the tree at the foot of which Cole had buried the clothes.

This personage was none other but Phil, the dwarf. As he stood at the foot of the tree he broke out into a blood-curdling laugh, and when his mirth had subsided, he exclaimed:

"Now Phil will get even. Pete Cole bury clothes here, after he murder old Frazer. Phil hate Pete Cole; he treat poor dwarf mean."

With this the dwarf knelt down on his knees, and with his hands commenced to dig, until at last he pulled the blood-stained garments from their hiding-place.

He took these to the hut, where he put them in a sack, and then throwing the bundle over his shoulder, he proceeded to walk to Berkely.

Peter Cole had always used the dwarf brutally, and for this reason Phil hated him. Now the hideous creature had a chance to get even with the man, and later on we will see how the dwarf used the clothes to benefit himself.

Phil reached the city in safety and carried his treasure to the hut, which he succeeded in entering without any one seeing him. He proceeded immediately to the cellar, where he hid the bag among some old lumber which was piled up in a corner.

Early that morning Phil had heard Cole and the rest of the gang talking about putting Mr. Frazer out of the way, and as soon as the murderer left the rendezvous the dwarf followed him to Berkley, and thence to the shanty where Cole left his change of clothing

Phil remained at the opening of the woods until Cole and Mr. Frazer came along, when he hid in the bushes and witnessed the whole tragedy.

Following the murderer from the scene of the murder to the shanty, Phil thought that he would give Cole a scare, and we know how well he succeeded. As the dwarf was very fleet of foot, he was more than a match for Cole, and he managed to dart from one place to another before his persecutor could reach the spot.

Mr. Frazer being murdered and out of the way, the scoundrels determined to get possession of the treasure in the Safe Deposit Vault and then leave the city.

Foss was not aware of the fact that Mr. Frazer had been foully dealt with, but supposed, as did the rest of his friends, that the lawyer was out with the police searching for Nellie.

When the detective overheard the conversation between the three men at Bottle Koenig's, he heard no mention made that Mr. Frazer was not alive. If he had he would then and there have made an attempt to arrest the men. The horrifying fact of the murder was left to be revealed to him later on, when he would see that full justice was meted out to the scoundrels.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSION

THE men, after they entered the hut with the cash-box, went direct to the conference-room where Louise Porter, Becky Suggs, and Mother Carey were waiting for them. Phil was perched on the end of the lounge, and was amusing the women by making all kinds of funny grimaces at the old hag, who was fast asleep, and whose face he had blacked with soot which he had taken from the chimney.

In their excitement over the success of their plan the three scoundrels forgot to bolt the front door after them, so that when the detective tried the knob he found that the door yielded, and he was able to slip into the hall.

Foss had stationed his men around the house, and had placed three policemen at the door to come to his aid when he gave the signal.

The detective, as soon as he entered the hall, crept noiselessly along until he reached the door of the room where the men and women were assembled. By looking through the key-hole he could see all that was going on in the room.

Cole had placed the box on the table, and his companions, with the exception of Mother Carey, all crowded around him, and waited with bated breath for him to pick the lock.

The detective chuckled to himself as he thought of the surprise which awaited the thieves.

Click, click, click!

The pick was turned in the lock several times, but it did not yield. Every minute's delay only increased the excitement of the men and women.

"Devil take the thing, it won't open," exclaimed Cole, after he had made the sixth attempt to open the box.

"Let me try," said Suggs. I may be able to open it. Your hand is unsteady, and you are too excited."

"Take it, and see what you can do," returned Cole, and he shoved the box toward Suggs.

"I will do that pretty quick to-morrow," rejoined the confidence man, as he tugged away at the lock.

Click! Bang!

The lock broke at last, the lid flew open, and the sand and pebbles were scattered all over the table and the floor.

This, then, was their rich haul—a box of sand and pebbles. This, then, was what they had paid the night-watchman of the Safe Deposit Vaults a thousand dollars in gold for. They had been sold, and badly, too.

Outside of the room the detective took in the whole scene, and it was as much as he could do to refrain from laughing. At last, as soon as the party in the room was quiet, Suggs turned to his companions and said:

"I wonder who could have done this?"

They were all silent for some time, and then Becky spoke up:

"I would like to bet that this was done by some detective who got wind of the plot."

The man looked at her, and then Cole exclaimed, as a sudden thought flitted before his mind:

"Do you remember the Sheeny fellow?"

"By jingo! I forgot about him," rejoined Clews.

"That fellow was a detective," assuredly broke in Suggs.

"What detective do you suppose it was?" queried Becky.

All of them relapsed into silence, for the question was more than any of them could answer. The scene and the chagrin of the men and women had pleased Phil so much that he was lying on the floor roaring with laughter, and only stopped when Cole gave him a savage kick in the back.

The dwarf howled with pain, and jumped quickly to his feet, dodging another brick, and placing himself on the other side of the table, so that Cole could not reach him. He dodged back and forth, making faces at his tormentor, and then hissed between his closed teeth:

"Pete Cole, look out; Phil will get square. Phil knows something about you."

At this moment Louise jumped from her chair, and exclaimed:

"I have it—I have it!"

This caused Cole to let the dwarf alone, and he faced the woman, asking:

"What have you?"

"I think I can tell who changed that box and took away the securities."

"Who?" asked her companions.

"Hugh Foss," answered Louise.

"Foss is dead!" exclaimed Clews.

Click!

The sound of a pistol being cocked fell on the ears of the men and women. They all started. The door was thrown violently open, and a moment afterward Hugh Foss stood before them.

"Surrender!" ordered the detective, as he pointed two revolvers at the men and women, and then signaled for his men to come into the house.

"Hugh Foss alive!" exclaimed Becky Suggs, as she drew near to Clews.

The only escape from the room was through the door, and the detective now blocked up this avenue. The three scoundrels suddenly recovered their composure, and then Suggs exclaimed as he drew out his pistol and fired:

"Down the fly-cop!"

Both the detectives and the thieves exchanged shots. The room was filled with smoke and the light was put out.

Foss jumped into the room and clutched Clews by the throat. With a powerful effort he disarmed the scoundrel and slipped the handcuffs on him, rendering him helpless.

Just then, as he was arising to his feet, the detective felt the cold muzzle of a revolver placed against his temple, and Becky Suggs hissed in his ear:

"You die now, Hugh Foss."

The revolver was cocked, and the she-fiend pressed her finger against the trigger. Before she pulled it, however, Foss jerked his head aside, and with the butt-end of his revolver he dealt Becky a blow on her wrist, which caused her to utter a cry of pain and drop her weapon, which exploded, and the ball lodged in the wall on the opposite side of the room.

The detective followed this achievement up and snapped the nippers over Becky's wrists before she was able to recover from her surprise.

The light from a bull's-eye lantern was thrown on the scene now, and the detectives, who had been stationed outside of the house, crowded into the room.

Cole, the dwarf, and Mother Carey had been captured, while Suggs and Louise met with their deaths from the bullets discharged by Foss' companions.

The cries of a woman's voice now sounded throughout the house. The detective listened, and then going up to Cole he said, in a tone of authority:

"Peter Cole, tell me where you have confined Nellie Frazer."

"I won't tell you, curse you!" exclaimed Cole.

The detective turned to the old woman. Phil saw his opportunity, and, chafing under the presence of the handcuffs, he exclaimed:

"Phil knows where girl is."

"Where is she?"

"Let Phil go. Phil tell you."

The detective undid the dwarf's handcuffs, and said:

"Now show me where the girl is"; then, turning to the men: "Guard the prisoners until I get back."

"Get keys from old woman," the dwarf said.

Foss took a bunch of keys from Mother Carey's pocket, and then handing them to Phil, he said:

"Show me where the girl is."

The dwarf took the keys, and then bounded up-stairs, closely followed by the detective, who carried his lantern in his hand.

The door of Nellie's cell was opened, and the girl fell fainting into the arms of the detective, who carried her downstairs and laid her on the lounge. The dead bodies had been put in a wagon and taken to the morgue.

While the detective was trying to bring Nellie back to consciousness, Phil stepped down into the cellar, and procuring his bag, came up into the room again, and placed it on the table.

Nellie had recovered, and the detective arose to his feet, and was about to give the order to remove the prisoners, when Phil exclaimed:

"Detective wait—Phil showing something!"

The detective turned and looked at the dwarf, who was untying the string which bound the neck of the bag. The prisoners looked on, wondering what Phil could be up to. At last the string was untied, and with a triumphant look Phil pulled ou the blood-stained garments and exclaimed:

"Detective, listen. These clothes covered with blood belong to Pete Cole. He murdered Frazer the lawyer. The body is in the quarries near Berkely."

At this accusation Cole turned pale, and at the sight of

the blood-stained garments he covered his face with his hands, and broke down completely.

Foss took Nellie out of the hut, put her into a carriage, and drove her to her home, where he left her in charge of the housekeeper, and drove to police headquarters to assist in searching the prisoners.

At the station-house Foss found on the person of Clews letters and papers which showed that he was Charles Rose, the husband of the murdered woman.

Among the letters was a letter written on a piece of brown paper, with one corner torn off. It was upon this corner that the scoundrel had written the warning note to his wife. Foss also found the letter from Libbie Howland, in which she told her husband all that had happened to her during the years of her absence.

This letter stated that Mrs. Howland had gone to Australia, where she married a rich farmer, by whom she had the child that had been killed with her. The farmer had left her all of his wealth, and when he died she came to San Francisco to live. She had supposed that Rose was dead, and only found out that he was alive when she saw him on the street, and found out that he had married Becky Suggs. Then it was that she had written the upbraiding letter to him.

At the trial Foss produced as evidence the scraps of paper, and when the writing on these was compared with the letters written by Charles Rose, it was proven beyond a doubt that he had committed the murder.

Rose and Cole were sentenced to be hanged, and in a few weeks expiated their crimes upon the scaffold, and the community was rid of two of the biggest scoundrels that ever walked the streets of San Francisco.

Mother Carey committed suicide in her cell, and Becky Suggs was sentenced to a life term in the State Prison. Phil, the dwarf, was allowed to go free, and he soon disappeared, and the detective never knew what became of him.

On investigation it was found that Ella Rose was Charles Rose's sister and Nellie's mother. The lawyer had met her in the East, and married her, bringing her to San Francisco to live. Suggs was in love with Ella, and had abducted her, locking her in the same room in which Nellie had been confined. The lawyer rescued his wife from the scoundrel, and Suggs was compelled to leave the city. It was for this that Suggs hated the lawyer, and was instigated to commit the forgeries.

Charles Rose came of a good family, but by the association with evil companions he sank to the depth of degradation which finally brought him to the gallows.

The farmer Howland was a cousin of the lawyer, although Mr. Frazer did not know it, and the widow's money went to Nellie, as she was the sole heir.

Nellie Frazer was sick in bed with a brain fever for a number of weeks, but finally recovered, and went to the Geysers for her health. She returned to the city, and a year from the time when her father was murdered she was married to Hugh Foss, the detective, and the happy couple took up their residence at the lawyer's house—the home which was dearer to Nellie than all the wealth she was the possessor of.

THE END.

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CURRENT NEWS

NEW ALTITUDE RECORD

On May 28th last, Adjutant Casale, a French aviator, in a flight for altitude ascended 31,000 feet. This constitutes a world's record, being 500 feet better than the flight of Capt. Lang of the British army, who, in January last, ascended to 30,500 feet.

GIRL ASLEEP FOURTEEN WEEKS

Katie Rose, fourteen years old, of Mobile, Ala., has been asleep for fourteen weeks, though physicians say she is not suffering from sleeping sickness.

At times she arouses from her stupor, plays the piano and sings. She has slept for one week on a stretch.

VALUES WIFE AT $50.

"She's worth $50 and I'll pay it if you can find her and send her back to me," said John F. Malone, an Ironton, Ohio, farmer, who called at police headquarters, Wheeling, W. Va., the other day and asked the police to locate the whereabouts of his wife, who left him a year ago. Malone is sixty-five years old, while his wife is but twenty-eight.

CLERK "OFFICIAL CLOCK".

Roy White, for years a local grocery clerk, was the "official clock" of many people in the west end of Olathe, Kan. He always left the store promptly at 11 o'clock in the morning for his mid-day meal and returned at 12. People would set their kitchen clocks by him. Now White has purchased the store, and instead leaving at 11 he leaves at 12.

POISONOUS "DRINKS" SEIZED IN RAIDS

Here are a few of the "poisonous drinks" of dry Portsmouth, N. H.:

Jamaica ginger, bay rum in milk, orange juice with yeast cakes, hair tonic, lavender water, cider from casks containing boiled prunes, whole corn with raisins, saccharine in apple juice, elixir and numerous other patent medicines containing alcohol.

THE CHINESE METHOD

The Chinese laundryman's scheme for identifying the different "washes" is ingenious, and reliable. Each week of the year is known to him by the name of a god, goddess or celestial object, and each wash-ticket for that week bears that name, as well as its own special number and the name of the laundryman, thus: "Moon, No. 10, Sing Lonn." The ticket being torn in two, one-half is kept by the laundryman and the other is given to the customer.

NO WOODEN LEG

When Private Charles Anderson, A. E. F., wrote home to his relatives asking them to go into the woods and pick out a nice piece of wood suitable for making a wooden leg, the relatives expected him to return a cripple. When he wrote the letter he was lying in a hospital in France with a large hole in his leg from shrapnel fragments. Physicians expected to amputate the limb. Anderson arrived home, at White Hall, Ill., recently, but he didn't need a wooden leg. The wound had healed and amputation proved unnecessary.

BIRD LIKE A GHOST

A big white bird, said to resemble an owl, and claimed to be somewhat on the order of the "Jersey Devil", which caused so much commotion several years ago, has been seen in the central part of Gloucester City, N. J., at night. Among those who have seen the bird are William Cattell and William Gilmore, officials of the fire department, who say it has been fluttering about the fire house. They are trying to catch it to find out what kind it is. It resembles the bird seen about the Washington Park bag-loading plant, giving rise to spook stories among the guards.

CORK STONE HOUSE SINGS

Among the many strange buildings in India, one of the most curious is a house which actually sings.

Except for its extraordinary exterior decorations, it is, to all appearances, no different from other buildings in the neighborhood, but as the wind sweeps round its niches and eaves a very curious singing noise is emitted which can be heard for some distance down the street.

For a long time the music remained a mystery, but at last an engineer solved the puzzle. He discovered that the sound was caused by the material with which the house was built—a porous cork stone, and the wind, blowing through the little holes, was the cause of the music.

The building is known as the Palace of the Winds, and is situated at Geypore.

GOOSE DIGESTS GOLD

A few days ago the family of C. C. Taylor, of Bellefonte, Pa., decided to feast upon a goose that they had purchased from a farmer. The goose was killed and in preparing it for the oven, Mrs. Taylor felt some very hard substance in the fowl's gizzard. This aroused her curiosity and when she cleaned the gizzard she made a close examination and found a piece of yellow metal about the size of a nickel. Curious to know what it was, she took it to the Bellefonte Trust Company, where it was decided that it was what remained of a five-dollar gold piece. It was worn entirely smooth on both sides and all the milling was gone from the edges, inasmuch as the goose was only about sixteen months old and it could not have swallowed the money before it was almost full grown, it is evidence that the constant grind in a goose's gizzard will reduce almost anything in due time.

As a matter of dollars and cents the coin will be sent to the Philadelphia mint for appraisal to find out just how much of its valuation remains, and then it will be up to mathematicians to calculate just how much gold that goose used in its digestive functions daily.

WOMAN HAS OLD LINCOLN BALLOT

Mrs. Jessie M. Lewis of No. 205 West Main street, Ontario, California, exhibited to friends recently an interesting souvenir which she found in a trunk in the attic of her home. It was a Republican ballot for the Presidential campaign in which Abraham Lincoln was elected and his name appeared at the top. Mrs. Lewis' father, J. W. Hiatt, was a candidate for township trustee on the same ticket.

WHY THE PARROT WOKE UP

The parrot owned by Miss M. Louise Jackson of Cambridge, Mass., known as "Haco" has not shown the vivacity which is her natural wont. Instead of roaming around the house and interesting herself in affairs she has been contented to remain in the cage and most of the time has slept. Then Miss Jackson found the situation had suddenly changed and "Haco" greeted her with the usual "Good morning". On examing the cage Miss Jackson discovered an egg about 4 inches in circumference.

NEST IN MAIL BOX

Probably a bird's nest in a rural mail box is a rare thing, if it has ever happened before, but out in Oswegatchie, N. Y., a small bird has taken possession of a mail box and has already built her nest and laid three eggs, and it looks as though she would complete her work of hatching and rearing her young. The particular box picked out by the bird is one that is in use daily, and the mail-carrier never misses a stop at this box. Mrs. Bird seems to enjoy the idea to have the mail-carrier lift the cover of the box and deposit the mail, and will sit on her nest as unconcerned as can be. The mail box has been fixed so that it will not close entirely, so that the bird may complete the task of rearing her young. It is not known what kind of a bird this is, but it is thought that it is a phebe, being brown of color and about the size of a sparrow, and laying sky-blue eggs.

REMAINS OF ANCIENT AMERICAN DISCOVERED

Geologists and anthropologists are having a lively controversy among themselves over certain human remains which have been unearthed at Vero, Fla. Human bones were found in geological formations of the pleistocene or glacial period; man existed in America during that early age. But, objectors interpose, the skeletal remains are those of a modern sort of man, a regular Indian type. So recent type at that period is incredible. The individual must have been buried in the ancient strata.

The other side answers that burial is out of question. The formation of the earth above the bones indicated gradual natural accumulation, and not the heaping of earth into a grave. That the bones were scattered some twenty feet from the others, which indicates that they drifted while on the surface (how could buried bones move twenty feet through the soil?); and, further, that the fact of the remains being of a modern type of man merely shows that this modern type of man lived in the pleistocene age.

SOME FACTS ABOUT COLLARS

The first important innovation in neckwear for men was made by the celebrated English dandy, George Bryan Brummell, commonly called Beau Brummell, who was born in London 141 years ago. He was the first to substitute the delicate muslin or silk neckcloth for the thick padded roll which, before his innovation, was invariably swathed around the neck as a cravat. It was just a little over a century ago that the Beau inaugurated this style of neckwear, but it remained for an American woman to invent the modern starched linen collar. She was the wife of a blacksmith in Troy, N. Y., and she invented the separate collar to save work, as she noted that the shirts remained cleaner much longer than the collar. The Rev. Ebenezer Brown saw one of the separate collars around the neck of the blacksmith, and in 1829 he engaged in the business of marketing separate collars and cuffs. The industry thus established in Troy has ever since remained centered there, as 80 per cent. of all collars made in North America come from Troy.

CLOCKS STRIKE THIRTEEN

Among the most curious clocks in the world are two in Worsley, Lancashire, England, that never strike one. Instead they strike thirteen at 1 a. m. and 1 p. m. One of them is over the Earl of Ellesmere's place, called Worsley Hall, and is the original clock which the Duke of Bridgewater had placed in the tower. It is said that the Duke had the clock made to strike the "unlucky" number so as to warn his workmen that it was time to return after dinner, some of them having excused themselves for being late on the ground that they could not hear it strike one.

This recalls the incident when the big clock of the houses of Parliament saved a man's life. A soldier in the reign of William and Mary was condemned by court-martial for falling asleep while on duty on the terrace at Windsor. He stoutly denied the charge, and by way of proof solemnly declared that he heard Old Tom (the predecessor of Big Ben) strike thirteen instead of twelve. The officers laughed at the idea, but while the man was in prison awaiting execution several persons came forward and swore that the clock actually did strike thirteen, whereupon the soldier was pardoned and released.

THE CLIFF-DWELLERS

One of the most interesting historical wonders in this country is the ruins of the abodes of the cliff-dwellers in southern Colorado and Utah. When the Europeans were still barbarians these cliff-dwellers of the Southwest were a semi-civilized race. They had developed arts, had built churches, temples and council halls. One of their buildings in Arizona was large enough to seat 10,000 persons.

A great deal of mystery surrounds the cliff-dwellers. They flourished in a very ancient time; in fact, some of their caves are thought to date from the stone age. When the Spaniards came to the country they found the cliff-dwellings long since abandoned. The most plausible explanation of the disappearance of this race is that they were driven off by marauding bands.

The cliff houses were usually built near some stream of running water, which was kept replenished by the everlasting snows on the mountains. The people irrigated ground in the valleys and on the mountains—above the cloud line—raised corn.

Some of their buildings were great community houses with hundreds of rooms. One populous city was several miles in length, with one long street. The caves were burrowed in the mountain rock, which is of a kind that is easily chiseled. The rooms were usually about ten feet across and just high enough to permit one to stand upright. Each house had a large cave where the dwellers worshipped a sacred serpent and fire.

MAKING USE OF TOMATO SEEDS AND SKINS

Tomatoes are used in enormous quantities in the United States for food purposes and as a condiment, and the industry of canning tomatoes and that of making catsups or soups of them has developed to considerable importance. In the making of soups and catsups, says Popular Science Monthly, only the pulp of the tomatoes is used and therefore the skins and seeds were discarded as useless.

Recently economic chemistry has called attention to the possibility of utilizing both the skins and the seeds of the tomatoes. From the seeds 17.3 per cent of oil can be obtained, which has an agreeable smell and taste and a caloric value equal to that of olive oil. When treated with dryers it acquires good drying properties, and is also useful in soap-making. The seeds from which the oil has been removed and the skins of the tomatoes can be pressed into cakes which have considerable value for feeding cattle. Or the mixed mass may be spread for fertilizing purposes. Its manurial value was found to compare favorably with barnyard manure in potash, phosphoric acid and nitrogen.

Considerable work has already been done in Italy and other foreign countries toward utilizing tomato refuse, and in the Italian province of Parma about 12,000 tons of skins and seeds are worked up into oil and fertilizer every year.

STEAL WHISKY, FILL BARRELS WITH WATER

John Basar, saloon-keeper of 162 Ackerman avenue, Clifton, N. J., recently ordered through a Newark agent two half-barrels of whisky from one of the leading distilleries in Kentucky. They were some time coming, but Mr. Basar was happy, for he was almost out of "the stuff". He lost no time tapping the barrels.

"It" flowed with a sparkle but had no color. A thousand thoughts crept through Basar's mind. He hadn't ordered white whisky. Maybe he was seeing things. To make certain he was in his own cellar and not on a flight of fancy he tasted the stuff.

But it wasn't any of "the stuff" at all. It was just plain water. It flowed like water, it tasted like water and his friends reassured him it was water.

The two half-barrels had cost him $450, so he let the agent know about the water as quickly as telegraph wires would do so. He was advised that when "the stuff" was started on its journey to Clifton it was real honest to goodness whisky.

But there are a number of "dry" spots between the particular part of Kentucky from which the booze came and Clifton. Barrels have often been drained before they ever reached their destination, but this is the first time on record that they have been refilled with water.

The railroad officials are puzzled by the latest ruse of the whisky thieves, for they don't know just where to start their hunt. Mr. Basar is looking to them to make good that $450.

CURIOUS SOUNDS AND NOISES

It is a very curious fact that the loudest sounds are not always made by the largest animals. The roar of the lion exceeds in sonorousness the cry of the elephant. Any one who had only heard, without seeing, a bull-frog, might well suppose that its fearful voice, breaking the silence of the night, must certainly come from the throat of an animal of formidable dimensions.

Perhaps the most remarkable case of vocal power in an animal is that encountered by a traveler in the highlands of Borneo. He was informed by some natives that they had heard a tiger roaring in the neighborhood. Such news is always startling to a stranger in the jungles, and hardly less so to the natives.

An investigation was accordingly set on foot, which resulted in the discovery that the alarming roars had been emitted by a toad! This toad of Borneo, however, was by no means an ordinary member of the family. It measured no less than fourteen and one-half inches around the body.

That the natives should not have recognized the true source of the sound shows that the existence of such toads was either unknown to them, or at any rate, they had never discovered the remarkable vocal capabilities of the animals.

In this relation Bates tells of an incident that occurred during his travels along the Amazon. Among the many sounds heard in the dense Brazilian forests was a kind of loud metallic clanking, that sometimes rang through the trees, and the origin of which the traveler was unable to discover. Whenever it was heard, the natives cowered with fear, ascribing it to a supernatural origin. Possibly the noise was so loud that they missed its location by searching only for something of corresponding physical dimensions.

TWELVE BATTLESHIPS TO BE SCRAPPED

Twelve pre-dreadnought battleships will be relieved of active duty with the fleet placed out of commission and probably eventually broken up for junk or used as targets by more modern vessels, under plans now being worked out by the Navy Department. The ships are of the mixed battery type and are not considered of any value against latest type fighting craft.

Four of the battleships, the historic squadron comprising the Oregon, Indiana, Iowa and Massachusetts, have already been relegated to the scrap heap. The remaining eight, apparently doomed to the same fate, are the Kearsarge, Kentucky, Illinois, Alabama, Wisconsin, Maine, Missouri and Ohio.

The twelve vessels, built between 1893 and 1901, represent a total expenditure for hulls and machinery alone of more than $90,000,000. When placed out of commission they will release for other duty approximately 10,000 enlisted men and nearly 400 officers.

The question of what to do with so many practically useless battleships after they have been placed out of commission is before the department at this time. The historic Oregon has been offered to the State of Oregon to be used as the State sees fit for memorial purposes and probably will be accepted. The Iowa, Indiana and Massachusetts probably will be broken up for the metal that is in them, these three ships containing an immense amount of valuable copper and brass. The remaining eight will very probably be used as targets for experiments in the effects of modern gunfire, as was the old Texas.

It has been suggested that a number of the vessels could be well utilized as coast defense units by sinking them in shoal water at the entrance to the more important harbors, making them veritable forts. It is possible that four of them will be used for this purpose.

The older vessels to be retained are the Virginia, Nebraska, Georgia, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Louisiana, Vermont, Kansas, Minnesota and New Hampshire. All of them have composite batteries of 12 and 8-inch guns. They range in tonnage from the Virginia class of 16,000 tons to the New Hampshire type of nearly 18,000 tons.

SMUGGLERS HAVE NEW TRICKS

Few people have any idea of the enormous amount of smuggling carried on between the occupied German territory and the trans-Rhine districts, says *The London Times*, or of the extraordinary methods and devices to which the smugglers have resorted. It was only by chance that the forbidden traffic was discovered. *The Times* continues:

One day a keen "Jock" sentry at one of the control posts on the frontier noticed a woman of abnormal proportions walking past his post. The sentry couldn't understand it, and he wasn't going to allow the woman to pass until he did; he prodded her with his finger and made the discovery that the size of her body was due not to an excess of clothing, but to a quantity of butter concealed underneath.

The weakness in the system of search was that it was quite impossible to deal with the women. This was at once seized upon, and men gave up trying to run the blockade themselves and "handed over" to their wives and daughters, loading them in some cases like pack mules. This development was, of course, soon noted, and in order to meet it a party of women searchers of the Q. M. A. A. Corps was brought out from England as an experiment. These English women all spoke German fluently; they entered into their work with great zest, and it was soon evident that they were a great acquisition to the anti-smuggling campaign. Eventually the traffic became so highly organized that the existing system of control was found to be insufficient. An inventive brain then evolved the idea of a "flying column" of men and women searchers for the purpose of swooping down unexpectedly upon railway stations, holding up trains bound for the neutral zone and systematically searching every man, woman and child, as well as all parts of the train itself.

Each searcher told off to a particular job and as little delay as possible caused. The men are bundled out on to the platform and searched by the soldiers, while the women are searched in the compartments by the members of the Q. M. A. A. C.

An idea of the magnitude of the traffic is conveyed when it is stated that during the past fortnight over 400,000 cigarettes and nearly half a ton of soap have been recovered. Women have been discovered carrying ten pounds of coffee in especially-made corsets and especially constructed petticoats, the latter consisting of a sack hanging down in front and one at either hip. There have been cases of fur coats, boas and even umbrellas stuffed with cigarettes, while a picture with a very deep frame was found to contain 4,000 cigarettes. Tins made to fit the ventilators in railway carriages, small boxes tacked to the bottoms of seats, and parcels attached to the axle under the train and hidden among the coal in the engine are among the devices which have been discovered. Two ingenious methods adopted after dark are the placing of parcels wrapped in black paper on the top of trains and tramcars and the hanging of packages from the compartment doors on the far side from the platform. A nurse was caught with a false bottom to the bag she carried, containing 1,000 cigarettes. A woman waddling down a station platform in an extraordinary manner came to the notice of a keen-eyed subaltern. Being unable to search the lady, he politely conducted her to the guard room; what persuasion he used has not been disclosed, but the fact remains that she pressed a button (or something of the sort) and was at once relieved of a large ham which fell to the ground, much to the astonishment of her captor.

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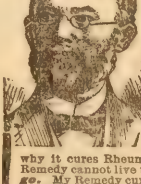

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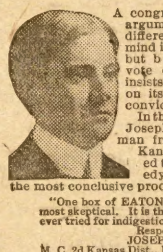

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